The COAST OF ADVENTURE

HAROLD BINDLOSS

dnt 1.30

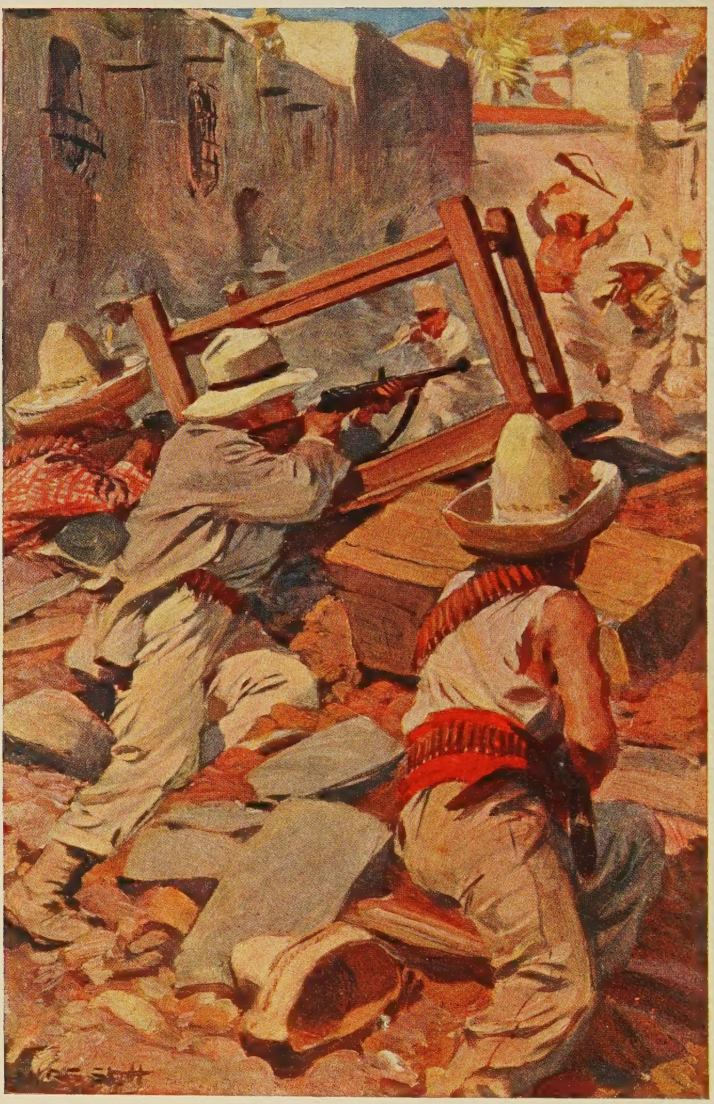
THE COAST OF ADVENTURE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

ALTON OF SOMASCO
LORIMER OF THE NORTHWEST
THURSTON OF ORCHARD VALLEY
WINSTON OF THE PRAIRIE
THE GOLD TRAIL
SYDNEY CARTERET, RANCHER
A PRAIRIE COURTSHIP
VANE OF THE TIMBERLANDS
THE LONG PORTAGE
RANCHING FOR SYLVIA
PRESCOTT OF SASKATCHEWAN
THE DUST OF CONFLICT
THE GREATER POWER
MASTERS OF THE WHEATLANDS
DELILAH OF THE SNOWS
BY RIGHT OF PURCHASE
THE CATTLE BARON'S DAUGHTER
THRICE ARMED
FOR JACINTA
THE INTRIGUERS
THE LEAGUE OF THE LEOPARD
FOR THE ALLINSON HONOR
THE SECRET OF THE REEF
HARDING OF ALLENWOOD
THE COAST OF ADVENTURE

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/coastofadventure0000haro



"Dropping his chin upon the stock, he stiffened his arms and held his breath as he squeezed the trigger"

—*Page 327.*

The COAST OF ADVENTURE

By HAROLD BINDLOSS

Author of "Prescott of Saskatchewan," "Ranching for Sylvia," "For the Allinson Honor," "The Secret of the Reef," etc.

WITH FRONTISPIECE IN COLOR

FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT, 1915, BY FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHED IN ENGLAND UNDER THE TITLE "A RISKY GAME"

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Father Agustin's Sheep	1
II.	The Adventures Begin	12
III.	High Stakes	23
IV.	The "Enchantress"	32
V.	The Call of the Unknown	43
VI.	On the Spanish Main	52
VII.	Mangrove Creek	64
VIII.	The Traitor	73
IX.	Stranded	80
X.	The Peon Pilot	89
XI.	A Modern Don Quixote	99
XII.	Baiting the Smugglers	105
XIII.	The Emerald Ring	117
XIV.	Smooth Water	126
XV.	The Tornado	136
XVI.	The Ruse	145
XVII.	Eluding the Gunboat	157
XVIII.	The Test of Love	167
XIX.	The Cuban Spy	178
XX.	The Arrest of Castillo	189
XXI.	A Half-breed's Trick	198
XXII.	Held for Ransom	209
XXIII.	The Intercepted Note	219
XXIV.	In the Camp of the Hillsmen	229
XXV.	A Trial of Speed	240

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXVI.	Trapped	250
XXVII.	Hands Down	259
XXVIII.	The President's Despatches	271
XXIX.	The Presidio	283
XXX.	The Escape	294
XXXI.	The American Trader	305
XXXII.	Love's Vision	315
XXXIII.	The Hero of Rio Frio	322
XXXIV.	The Coming Dawn	335

THE COAST OF ADVENTURE

CHAPTER I

FATHER AGUSTIN'S SHEEP

HIGH on the sun-scorched hillside above the steamy littoral of the Caribbean Sea the Spanish-Indian town of Rio Frio lay sweltering in the heat of afternoon. The flat-topped, white houses surrounding the plaza reflected a dazzling glare, and the heat shimmered mercilessly upon the rough paving-stones. Flakes of plaster had fallen from the buildings; a few of them were mere ruins, relics of a past age; for the town had been built when *conquistadores* from Spain first plunged into the tropic forest to search for El Dorado. Here and there dilapidated green lattices shaded upper windows, and nearer the ground narrow openings were guarded by rusty iron bars; but some of the houses showed blank outer walls, and the plaza had rather an Eastern than an American look. Spain has set upon the New World the stamp the Moors impressed on her.

At one end of the plaza stood the Café Four Nations, a low, open-sided room, with a row of decaying pillars dividing it from the pavement. It was filled

with flies, which stuck in black clusters to the papers hanging from the tarnished lamps and crawled about the dusty tables. The hot air was tainted with aniseed, picadura tobacco, and the curious musky smell which is a characteristic of ancient Spanish towns. On the right-hand side of the square rose the twin towers of the church of San Sebastian. Wide steps led up to the patch of shadow where a leather curtain left uncovered part of the door, and a niche above sheltered an image of the martyr with an arrow in his breast. The figure was well modeled and grimly realistic.

Opposite the café, the *calle Mercedes* cut a cool, dark gap through the dazzling town. On its outskirts, the hillside fell sharply to a wide, green level. Beyond this a silver gleam indicated the sea.

The café was in shadow, and at its inner end a number of citizens lounged, half asleep, in low cane chairs. The hour of the siesta had slipped away, but it was not yet time for dinner, and, having read the newspaper and guardedly discussed politics, the leading inhabitants of Rio Frio had nothing else to do. They were men with formal manners, a few dressed in rusty black, and some in white cotton, but all were not of pure European blood. One or two, indeed, plainly showed their Negro descent; others the melancholy of the Indian aboriginal.

Near the front pillars, a priest and two men of lighter color were seated at a table. Father Agustin wore a threadbare cassock and clumsy rawhide shoes, but he had an air of quiet dignity, and his sharply cut features were of the Gothic type, which is not uncommon in Spain. His accent was also clean Peninsular.

James Grahame, who sat opposite across the chessboard, wore the same vague but recognizable stamp of breeding, though his duck suit was getting ragged and his red silk sash was obviously cheap. He had steady gray eyes, and light hair, a rather prominent nose and a firm mouth. He looked older than his thirty years. The lines on his forehead hinted at stern experience, and his alertness was partly masked by an easy self-control. Walthew was younger, and dressed with scrupulous neatness in duck, with smart tan shoes. His face was mobile, his glance quick but open, and his mouth sensitive; he had the look of an aristocratic American.

Father Agustin made a deprecatory gesture as his thin, long-nailed hand moved across the board, and Grahame smiled.

"Yes," he said, filling the tiny glass before the priest, "it is mate this time, *padre*. When you had made a few moves I foresaw defeat, but while the candle burns one plays out the game."

"It is so, but not with all," Father Agustin replied in his fine Castilian. "The losing game needs courage."

"Experience helps. Getting beaten does not hurt so much when one grows used to it."

"Ah!" said the priest, "that is the way to the greatest victory man can win. But I am your guest, and will not moralize. I must compliment you on the game you play. It is bold and well thought out, but perhaps somewhat lacking in finesse."

"I am afraid finesse is not a virtue of mine," Grahame smiled.

Father Agustin studied him quietly. When the

Briton spoke he lost something of his reserve. His glance got keen, and his eyes had a curious hawk-like look. The priest could imagine him as swift and determined in action; quick to seize an advantage, but not a good plotter.

"For all that, it is a quality that is useful when one deals with the Latins, at Rio Frio, or elsewhere," the priest said.

"With apologies, *padre,* that is certainly true," Walthew agreed.

"So you have some business here? Perhaps, like the others, you seek a mineral concession."

"No. Our host, Don Martin, is of course out of office and doesn't deal in them."

"He never will," the priest said quietly. "The natural wealth of this country belongs to its people, but it is stolen from them, piece by piece, and given to foreigners."

"The foreigners pay for what they get."

"Yes," said the priest; "but where does the money go? If it were spent on the development of the country, one would not complain; but it is gamblers and courtezans who benefit. Those who hold office here fill their pockets from the public purse, and what is left when they are satisfied is needed to keep the Government in power."

"Then, why do you not reform your administration and put in straight men?"

Father Agustin indicated the drowsy group at the back of the café.

"These are our politicians! They meet every day and ruminate over the affairs of the nation. Think of it!"

"Well," said Walthew, "they do not look busy; but things do happen here now and then."

"It is true. A clique breaks up, there is a new coalition, and those who plotted each other's downfall are united again. We Latins have seldom a continuous policy. Sometimes there is a tumult in the streets and disaffection among the troops; then the man who rules us uses the whip. One hears of no trial, but a malcontent is missing, an officer's duty takes him to the fever jungles, where he cannot live. Sometimes, before the morning mist has lifted, one is wakened by a volley in the ditch behind the citadel."

"You are a patient race," Grahame remarked.

"Not so," said Father Agustin. "We often dream when we should act, but sometimes we act too soon. It is our misfortune that we do not know how to wait for the right moment." He paused and indicated the thinned-out ranks of pawns on the chessboard. "It is like that in the game of politics! The fight is between the greater pieces, but these others fall."

Grahame lighted a cigarette and glanced about the square, for Rio Frio was waking up. Here and there a woman of mixed blood crouched beside a cast-iron pot, fanning the handful of charcoal in it, ready for cooking the evening meal. A team of mules hauled a heavy load across the hot paving stones, a gaunt, dark-faced man in ragged cotton walking at the leaders' heads. Then came a pack train, with jingling bells, a cloud of flies following the burdened animals, and dusty, barefooted peasants plodding by their side. A group of women appeared from the mouth of a narrow street, their faces wet with perspiration and straps across their foreheads supporting the big cane

baskets on their backs. After them came a negro with a great tray of fruit upon his head. Next, three or four lean, barefooted fellows with ragged palm-leaf hats seated themselves on the pavement in a strip of shadow. They sat there, silent and motionless, contemplating the scene with listless eyes. The crowd looked dully apathetic, there was languor in the air they breathed; but, after all, they claimed descent from Spanish stock and Grahame thought they could be roused. It does not need much fanning to wake the smoldering fire in the Iberian's veins.

"My sheep!" said Father Agustin. "But they have other shepherds, who do not always lead them well."

"Shear the flock instead of guarding it? One would imagine that there is not much wool."

"None is so poor that he has nothing to give; if not goods, his voice, his sullen clamor and savage rage. The unthinking passion of the mob is terrible, but it is used by those who must answer for the deed some day. My people have their wrongs, but one cannot build the State on foundations of revenge and cruelty."

"But you have some honest men who hate the present Government."

"It is possible that their honesty lessens their influence. At Rio Frio one does not follow the ideal. It is remote and elusive; the feet get weary, and many things that please the eye lie nearer to hand." Father Agustin rose and bowed with grave courtesy. "And now I have talked enough and have some duties. I thank you and take my leave."

They watched him cross the plaza in his rusty cassock.

"Guess we've struck the wrong place," Walthew

said. "We're more likely to find trouble than money here. Well, there's a prospect of new experiences and a little excitement; and, anyway, we can't go back on our bargain with Don Martin."

"I never quite understood what led you to join me," Grahame remarked. "You know the risk we run. If the Government catches us, we'll be hanged or shot—whichever suits their fancy."

Walthew laughed.

"That's the attraction. But we won't be caught. I guess my Yankee ingenuity will count for something. If these sleepy-looking dagoes should trap us, we can find a way to give 'em the slip."

"Optimism is a great asset," Grahame smiled; "but in this country it must have a handmaiden—a convenient revolver."

Walthew leaned forward on the table.

"We've gone into a risky business together. I know nothing about you except that you seem to understand these dagoes and are a handy man to have around when they pull their knives. You know almost nothing about me."

He paused and smiled, and Grahame stirred uneasily. Walthew looked so boyish when he smiled like that. Would he have that carefree look in, say, two months? At times, Grahame regretted letting the boy join him in a venture that might try the heart of even a very strong man.

"I say, old chap, you aren't listening!" Walthew expostulated. "I'm telling you that the pater's a money-making machine. When I left Harvard he was for working me up into a partnership in the Walthew factory. But I couldn't stand it—too monotonous. I

took ten thousand dollars, instead, on condition that if I hadn't made good in my own way when two years were up, I'd go back and start as clerk."

"Well," Grahame returned with a smile, "I haven't much to tell. I have no family business to fall back on. As my means were not large enough to let me live as I liked at home, I went abroad to increase them. So far I haven't succeeded; but, on the whole, I've had a pretty good time, and I don't see much reason for grumbling about my luck."

This was correct, so far as it went, for Grahame did not think it worth while to explain that the fiery blood of the Borderers ran in his veins and his people had been soldiers and explorers until economic changes impoverished the family. Nor could he add that, because his name still counted for something in the North, he had left home to avoid being skilfully led into a marriage his friends thought suitable. He had, indeed, run away from a well-born girl with money, who, he suspected, was relieved to see him go. Since then he had known trouble, and it had hardened him. Yet he was honest and was marked by some polish.

At first sight, and by contrast with his comrade, Walthew looked callow, but he improved on acquaintance. It was not for nothing that he was the son of a shrewd manufacturer, who had built up a great business from a humble beginning. Walthew was cool in a crisis, and though outwardly careless, he was capable of looking ahead. So far, his talents were undeveloped, but Grahame suspected them.

While they sat talking, the scene in the square gained animation. Groups of men, moving quickly, emerged from the side streets; there was a murmur

of voices; and a crowd began to gather. Women called from the flat housetops; doors were opened and naked, dark-skinned children dragged in from the pavement. The concourse thickened about the steps of the church; gesticulating men chattered in the native patois.

Grahame's eyes grew keen.

"Something's going to happen," he said quietly.

Then he pressed his comrade's arm as a man appeared on the highest step of the church, and the murmur of the crowd swelled into a roar:

"Viva Castillo! Viva el libertador!"

The tall figure bowed and held up a hand, and for a moment there was silence; then a clear voice rang out, and Grahame tried to catch the sonorous Castilian words. He was too far off, and some escaped him, but he heard enough to gather that it was a grim indictment of the rulers of the country. The man spoke with fire and passion, using lavish gestures, and the cries that answered showed that he could work upon the feelings of the crowd.

The café had emptied, and its stout proprietor lounged, napkin in hand, near Grahame's table.

"Sounds pretty drastic, if I heard him right," Walthew remarked. "It's obvious that the authorities don't use half-measures. Did he say they had the deputation arrested and its leader shot?"

"So I understood," said Grahame. "How did you come to learn Castilian?"

"A notion of the old man's; he made me study languages. It's his ambition to ship the Walthew manufactures all over the world, and he got a footing in Cuba some time ago."

They were silent for a few minutes, and then Grahame turned to the landlord.

"Are these things true?"

"It is possible," the other answered cautiously.

"Then are you not afraid of a revolution?"

"No, señor; why should I fear? When there is a revolution the wine trade is good."

"But suppose your customers get killed?"

The landlord smiled.

"They are philosophic politicians, señor. It is the untaught rabble that fights. These others drink their wine and argue over the newspapers. Besides, there will be no revolution yet. Some talk, perhaps; possibly a supporter of the Government stabbed in the dark."

"And that will be all?" Grahame asked with a keen glance.

"There will be nothing more. The President waits and watches until he knows his enemies. Then he gives an order and there is an end of them."

The man turned away, and when, shortly afterward, the plaza rang with fierce applause, a voice was raised in alarm. Others joined in, the crowd began to stream back from the steps, and the orator disappeared. Then the mass broke into running groups, and through the patter of their feet there came a steady, measured tread. It drew nearer; short, swarthy men in dirty white uniforms marched into the plaza, the strong light gleaming on their rifles. They wheeled and stopped in ranks extended across the square, and the rifles went up to their shoulders. Warning shouts fell from the roofs, the patter of feet grew faster, the shadowy streets were choked with fugitives, and the

place was empty except for the line of quiet men. Then an officer laughed and called out, and the rifles came down with a clang.

"I suspect that we're up against a big man in the President," Walthew remarked. "Perhaps we'd better light out before these fellows ask us questions."

CHAPTER II

THE ADVENTURES BEGIN

A HALF moon hung over the flat roofs and the air was very still. Walthew and Grahame sat on a balcony surrounding the patio of Don Martin Sarmiento's house. The lattice windows that opened onto the balcony had old but artistic hinges of bronze, and the crumbling hardwood rails showed traces of skilful carving. Below, a small fountain splashed in a marble basin surrounded by palmettos, and a creeper covered a trellis with trails of dusky purple. A faint smell of decay mingled with the more pungent odors of garlic and olive oil from the kitchen in the courtyard, where a clatter was going on, but no sound from outside broke the silence. Rio Frio was very quiet now.

Cups of black coffee and a plate of fruit stood on a table in front of the men, and the señorita Blanca Sarmiento sat in a low chair opposite, with her duenna a few yards away. Blanca was then nineteen, and Walthew, watching her with unobtrusive admiration, wondered how it was that her relatives had not already arranged a marriage for her, unless, perhaps, her father's political opinions stood in the way. One ran a risk in opposing the Government at Rio Frio. The girl was attractive, with a finely molded figure, the grace of which was displayed by her languid pose.

Her hair was dark and coiled in heavy masses on a small, well-shaped head; her lips were full and very red, but her eyes were a deep blue and her skin fairer than that of the Spanish-American women Walthew hitherto had met. Nor did she use the powder they lavishly employ.

With a crimson rose in her hair, and a fine black-lace mantilla draped about her shoulders and emphasizing the whiteness of her neck and half-covered arms, she reminded Walthew of Carmen. She had something of the latter's allurement, but he thought it was an unconscious attraction that she exercised. The art of the coquette was missing; the girl had a certain dignity, and there was no hint of sensuality in her beauty. She had, no doubt, Spanish fire in her blood, but the lad thought it burned with a clear and pure flame.

"How do you come to speak English so charmingly?" he asked, in the hope of satisfying his curiosity about her.

"Do I speak it charmingly?" She laughed prettily. "Well, the explanation is that it was my mother's tongue. She was Irish, you must know."

"Ah!" said Walthew. "Now I understand."

Blanca gave him a glance of languid amusement.

"Your interest is flattering, señor; but what is it you understand?"

"That's an awkward question," Walthew answered, grinning frankly. "Still, there's something about you that I haven't noticed in Spanish-American girls, charming as they are."

"I'm afraid you're evasive. Do you know many of my countrywomen?"

"I'd like to know more. But I believe I'm good at reading character. It is a gift I inherited. My father was never mistaken about a man, and he has made use of a good many."

Blanca studied him. He had a smooth, fresh face, and looked very young, but while she thought he was direct and perhaps impulsive, something suggested that he was shrewd.

"Women are supposed to be more puzzling," she answered. "Then the Sarmientos come from Andalusia, and the Peninsulares are complex people. On the surface, we are often cheerfully inconsequent, but underneath there's a strain of melancholy. We live in the shadow of a fatalism we got from the Moors." She glanced at Grahame. "I think you can understand."

Grahame made a sign of assent. Sitting thoughtfully silent, his lean but powerful frame displayed by the thin white duck, and his strong, brown face impassive, he had a somber look. The man was reckless and sparkled with gay humor now and then, but it was the passing brightness of the North.

"Yes," he said, "I understand. But the Irish are optimists, and you are Irish too."

"Then perhaps that's why I keep hopeful. It is not always easy at Rio Frio, and life was not very joyous when we were exiles in America."

"You know my country?" Walthew broke in.

"I know your Southern States. We lived there in poverty, wandering up and down. My father is what his friends call a patriot, and his enemies a dangerous agitator. He had to choose between ruin and acquiescence in corrupt tyranny, and his course was plain. But the seed he had sown sprouted, the dic-

tator was driven out, and we came back to our own. Then, for a time, there was rest and safety, until the new ruler began to follow the old. He tried to bribe my father, who had helped to put him in power; but our honor was not for sale, and we had to leave the capital. There are men who trust my father, and look to him for help. . . . But I think you know something of this."

"Yes," said Grahame. "This afternoon we heard Castillo speak in the plaza."

The girl's eyes flashed angrily.

"Castillo is a fool! He pulls down what others have carefully built up."

"Tries to fire the mine before things are ready?" Walthew suggested. "A premature explosion's apt to blow up the men who prepared it."

Blanca gave him a keen glance.

"That is what nearly happened this afternoon. I believe you are to be trusted, señores?"

Grahame bowed.

"I am an adventurer, not a patriot, and my partner is out for money, but we made a bargain with Don Martin and we keep our word."

"Then," said the girl quietly, "Castillo is hiding here."

"In the *casa Sarmiento!* Isn't that dangerous? Won't the President's friends suspect?"

"I think they do, but they are afraid of my father's hold on the people; and there is only a handful of troops. When it is late they may make a search, but Castillo will leave soon. It is possible that you are in some danger."

Walthew laughed.

"That makes things interesting; I've never been in serious danger yet. But I suppose you have Don Martin's permission to be frank with us?"

"You are shrewd," she answered, smiling. "He has some confidence in my judgment. I spent the years that should have been happiest in poverty and loneliness. Are you surprised that I'm a conspirator? If you value your safety, you will beware of me."

"You might prove dangerous to your enemies, but I believe you'd be very staunch to your friends."

"*Gracias, señor.* I'm sure I can at least hate well."

A mulatto boy came out on to the balcony, and the girl's stout duenna, who had been sitting silent and apparently half asleep, rose and approached the table.

"Don Martin is disengaged," she said to Blanca; and when the girl waited a moment Grahame imagined that something had been left for her to decide.

He did not see any sign exchanged, but he thought with some amusement that he and his companion had passed a test when the duenna said to them:

"Don Martin would speak with you."

Walthew turned to Blanca, saying in Castilian:

"Until our next meeting! I kiss your hands, señorita."

The girl rose with a grave curtsy and there was a touch of stateliness in her manner.

"May you go in safety, señores! We expect much from you."

The mulatto led them away, and, passing through the house, they found their host and another man sitting by a dim lamp in a room with the shutters carefully closed. Don Martin Sarmiento wore an alpaca jacket, a white shirt, and a black silk sash round the

waist of his duck trousers. He was dark-haired and sallow, lightly built and thin, but his expression was eager and his eyes were penetrating. One could have imagined that his fiery spirit had worn down the flesh.

The other man was of coarser type. His skin was very dark, his face hot and fleshy, and Grahame noticed that his hands were wet with perspiration. His glance was restless and he had a rather truculent air, though there was something in it that hinted at uneasiness. Grahame thought that while he might show a rash boldness now and then, his nerve was not very good.

"With your permission, I present my comrade, Señor Castillo," said Don Martin. "Should any disaster overtake me, Señor Castillo, or another whom he appoints, will carry out our contract. Our funds are in safe hands; the rifles will be paid for."

"They will be delivered," Grahame answered quietly.

"Good! The word of a gentleman is sufficient. And now there is something more to be said. My house is my friend's, particularly if he is in trouble. but one has higher duties than hospitality."

"Yes," agreed Grahame, turning to Castillo. "The interests of one's country come first. There are only three of us, and Don Martin is the head of an important organization."

"It was not for my personal safety that I came here," Castillo broke in hotly. "I carried papers; lists of names, compromising details. It was unthinkable that they should fall into the President's hands. They must be made safe, and then it does not matter what happens to me—though I may, perhaps, claim to have been of some help to the cause of freedom."

Grahame saw his host's half-impatient smile.

"And so you gave them to Don Martin!" he remarked dryly.

"He is not watched as I am," Castillo answered. "I am hunted among the sierras, I hide in the fever swamps; but where I pass I leave a spark that tyranny cannot trample out. It burns and spreads; by and by there comes the purging conflagration."

"Yes," said Grahame. "I'm told, however, that your President has a keen scent for smoke, and I don't mean to scatter more sparks than I can help." He turned to Don Martin. "Since our business is finished, we can leave Rio Frio in an hour."

"I, too!" exclaimed Castillo. "It is not good for the cause that the soldiers find me. But there are difficulties; the house may be watched."

Don Martin looked thoughtful, but not disturbed; and Grahame saw that he could calmly take a risk. Danger and his host obviously were old acquaintances.

"It is better that you go," he answered. "Sometimes I entertain an American traveler, and Englishmen now and then visit Rio Frio. I do not think you are suspected yet, and you may be able to help us by drawing off the watchers' attention when you leave. We will see what can be done, but it would be safer for Señor Castillo not to come with us."

He took the others to the roof, where he walked to the edge and looked over the low parapet. A narrow, dark street divided Sarmiento's house from the next, but a lattice in a high wall was open, and Grahame imagined that he made out a man's head, which was, however, promptly withdrawn.

"Once or twice a guest of mine has reached the

calle by a rope, but the President's friends take precautions to-night," Don Martin remarked. "There remain the windows on the other side, but Castillo is heavy and fat. I think the door into the plaza would suit him best."

"Wouldn't the small one at the back be safer?" Walthew suggested.

"That will be watched, but it might be of some help if you went that way. Possibly you would not mind wearing a sombrero and a Spanish cloak."

"Not at all," Grahame assured him. "Still, there are two of us."

"That is an advantage. If one leaves shortly after the other, those who keep watch and expect a single man will be puzzled."

Walthew chuckled.

"Good! I'd a hankering after adventures, and now it looks as if I'd be gratified. But you had better not give us clothes with a name on them."

"In this country, people out of favor with the Government are modest about their names," Don Martin rejoined.

Ten minutes later Grahame, wearing a wide black hat and a dark Spanish cloak, stepped quietly out into the shadowy street. He had seen that his automatic pistol was ready to his hand, having had more than one experience of the half-breed's dexterity with the silent knife. For all that, his hurried, stealthy gait was assumed and not natural to the man, whose heart beat calmly, though he cast quick glances about. The houses were high, and the street seemed to get narrower and darker as he went on. Then he imagined he heard soft steps behind him. Walking faster, he

stopped at a corner and listened. Somebody was certainly following him.

Grahame's first impulse was to hide in a dark doorway and wait for his pursuer, but he reflected that this would not fall in with his host's plan, and he went on, keeping in the shadow while he made for the hotel at which he had left his mules. There were, he imagined, two men following him now.

A few moments afterward he reached the end of the dark street, and the empty plaza lay before him. The moon shed a faint light upon the stones and the high, white walls, and Grahame was glad of this. Now, if it were needful, he could defend himself: the walk through the shadow had been trying. Still, he must not hurry, for he never promised more than he meant to perform, and he knew that Don Martin relied upon his playing out his part. Perhaps he overdid it when he stopped to light a cigarette, for, looking up as he dropped the match, he saw two dark figures stop at the corner he had left. Then there was a low whistle, and one of them disappeared. Grahame smiled, because he knew that Walthew had divided the attention of the spies. The remaining man, however, walked quickly after him, and when Grahame was half way across the plaza he waited. His pursuer seemed to hesitate, for he came on more slowly, and stopped a few yards off.

"The American!" he exclaimed.

"English," said Grahame calmly. "The difference is, no doubt, not important."

The man looked hard at him, and Grahame carelessly dropped his hand upon his pistol.

"I am going to the *fonda;* if you are going that way,

I would rather you walked in front. One is careful at night, my friend."

Though the fellow had a sinister look, he smiled and went off with an apology, and Grahame, going on to the hotel, waited outside until Walthew came up. The boy looked hot and breathless, but Grahame noticed that he had a flower in his hand.

"I've been followed," Walthew laughed. "The fellows dropped back soon after I came into the moonlight. Guess they saw they were after the wrong man."

"Very possibly. It happened to me. I wonder whether Castillo got away?"

They listened, but the town was quiet. One or two citizens crossed the plaza, but no sound that indicated anything unusual going on rose from the shadowy streets.

"It seems likely," Walthew replied. "I don't think they could have arrested him without some disturbance. Why didn't they search Sarmiento's house?"

"Perhaps they were afraid of starting a riot that would spread. The President seems to be a capable man, and Don Martin obviously enjoys the confidence of the citizens. On the whole, I think he deserves it."

"So do I," Walthew agreed. "What do you think of the other fellow?"

"I wouldn't trust him. He's no doubt sincere, but I'm not sure of his nerve. But where did you get the rose?"

"On the pavement outside the *casa Sarmiento*," Walthew answered with some embarrassment.

"Mmm! Dropped from a window. Such things happen in Spanish-American towns, and it's possible

that the President's spies have noted it against you. However, you'll be too busy to think of the señorita when we get back to the coast." Grahame paused and added: "It might be wise to remember that you're engaged in a dangerous business, and can't run the risk of any complications. Neither of us can indulge in philandering until this job's finished."

"I'll take no risk that could get us into difficulties, but that's all I'll promise," Walthew said quietly.

Grahame gave him a steady glance.

"Well, I suppose I must be satisfied."

They entered the hotel, and half an hour later they left Rio Frio and rode down the hillside toward the misty swamps that fringed the coast.

CHAPTER III

HIGH STAKES

THE green shutters were half closed to keep the dazzling sunshine out of Henry Cliffe's private sitting-room at the smart Florida hotel, but the fresh sea breeze swept in and tempered the heat. The scent of flowers mingled with a delicate perfume such as fastidious women use, but Mrs. Cliffe was enjoying an afternoon nap and her daughter had gone out, so that Cliffe and Robinson had the room to themselves. They sat, opposite each other, at a small table on which stood a bottle and a cigar box, but there was only iced water in the tall glass at Cliffe's hand.

He had lunched sparingly, as usual, and now leaned back in his chair, looking thoughtful. His hair was turning gray, and his face was thin and lined, but there was a hint of quiet force about him. His dress was plain but in excellent taste, and he looked, what he was, a good type of the American business man, who had, however, as sometimes happens to his kind, sacrificed his health to commercial success. He was a financier and a floater of companies which generally paid.

Robinson was tall, with a high color, a prominent, hooked nose, and a face of Jewish cast. His clothes were well cut, but their adherence to the latest fash-

ion was rather pronounced, and he wore expensive jewelry. He was favorably known on Wall Street and sometimes heard of when a corner was being manipulated in the Chicago wheat pit. Cliffe had proposed a joint venture, because he knew that Robinson did not fear a risk and he had learned that a Jew can generally be relied upon when the reckoning comes.

"Well," said Robinson, "I see a chance of trouble. If President Altiera goes down, we lose our money."

"A sure thing," Cliffe agreed. "It will be our business to keep him on his feet, and it may cost us something. In a way, that's an advantage. He must have our help, and is willing to bid high for it."

"The revolutionaries may beat him."

"If he's left alone; but a little money goes a long way in his country, and the dissatisfied politicians would rather take some as a gift than risk their lives by fighting for it. Altiera can buy up most of them if he has the means; and he's capable of quieting the rest in a more drastic way." Cliffe smiled as he continued: "It's not my habit to plan a deal without carefully considering what I may get up against."

"Then it's your honest opinion the thing's a good business chance?"

"I call it that. One gets nothing for nothing. If you expect a prize, you must put up the stakes."

"Very well. Suppose you get the concession? Is there gold worth mining in the country?"

"I can't tell," Cliffe answered frankly. "The Spaniards found a good deal three hundred years ago, and now and then a half-breed brings some out of the bush. Guess we could get enough to use as a draw in the prospectus."

"You'd have to make the prospectus good," Robinson said with a thoughtful air. "Not an invariable rule, of course, but our names stand for something with the investing public."

"I generally do make good. If we don't strike gold, there's rubber, and the soil will grow high-grade cane and coffee. Give me the concession and I'll make it pay."

Robinson nodded. Cliffe's business talent was particularly marked in the development of virgin territory, though he never undertook the work in person. He knew where to find the right men, and how far to trust them.

"I suppose we won't be required to meddle with dago politics?" Robinson suggested.

"Certainly not; that's Altiera's affair, and he's capable of looking after it. A number of his people are getting tired of him, but so long as he can pay his soldiers up to time and buy support where he can't use force, he'll keep control."

"A bit of a brute, I've heard."

"He's not a humanitarian," Cliffe agreed. "Still, countries like his need a firm hand."

"Guess that's so," said Robinson.

He and Cliffe were respected in business circles. They met their obligations and kept the rules that govern financial dealings. That they might now be lending their support to tyrannical oppression, and helping to stifle the patriotic aspirations of a downtrodden people, did not enter their minds. That was not their affair; they were out for money, and their responsibility ended with the payment of dividends to those who bought their stock. They would fulfill this duty

if the thing were possible; although their standard of morality was not of the highest, they had prosperous rivals who fell short of it.

"I'll stand in," Robinson decided after a few moments' silence. "You can let me know how much you will need to carry you through when you get your plans worked out."

"Very well. It's over the first payments we take a risk. The money will, so to speak, vanish. We'll have nothing to show for it except the good will of the men in power. Some of it may even get into the wrong hands."

Robinson made a sign of comprehension. He knew something about official graft, for he now and then found it needful to smooth the way for a new venture by judicious bribery.

"There'll be no trouble after we've bought the concession," Cliffe continued. "The cash will then go to the treasury, and whichever party gets control will have to stand to the bargain. And now I guess we can let the matter drop until I fix things up."

They went out to a seat on the veranda, which looked across a row of dusty palmettos and a strip of arid lawn that the glistening showers from the sprinklers could not keep green. An inlet of blue water ran up to its edge, and beyond the curve of sheltering beach the long Atlantic swell rolled into the bay flecked with incandescent foam, for the sunshine was dazzling and the breeze was fresh. Two or three miles away there was a stretch of calmer water behind a long point on which the surf beat, and in the midst of this a small steamer gently rolled at anchor. Nearer the inlet, a little sailing-boat stood out to sea, her var-

nished deck and snowy canvas gleaming in the strong light.

"Miss Cliffe's boat, isn't it?" Robinson remarked. "Looks very small; I s'pose she's safe?"

"New York canoe club model," Cliffe replied. "Had her brought down on a freight-car. Evelyn's fond of sailing and smart at the helm. She's all right—though the breeze does seem pretty fresh."

While they talked about other matters, Evelyn Cliffe sat in the stern of the tiny sloop, enjoying the sense of control the grasp of the tiller gave her, and the swift rush of the polished hull through the sparkling foam. There was also some satisfaction in displaying her nerve and skill to the loungers on the beach, who were, for the most part, fashionable people from the Northern States. Among these was a young man upon whom Evelyn knew her mother looked with approval.

Though he had much to recommend him, and had shown a marked preference for her society, Evelyn had come to no decision about Reginald Gore, but she was willing that he should admire her seamanship, and it was, perhaps, in the expectation of meeting him afterward that she had dressed herself carefully. She wore well-cut blue serge that emphasized her fine pink-and-white color, and matched her eyes; and the small blue cap did not hide her red-gold hair.

As the breeze freshened, she forgot the spectators, and began to wish she had taken a reef in the mainsail before starting. Hitherto she had had somebody with her when it was necessary to shorten canvas; but it was unlike a sport to turn back because of a little wind. She would stand on until she had weathered the point and was out on the open Atlantic, and then run home.

The strain on the helm got heavier, the foam crept level with the lee deck, and sometimes sluiced along it when the boat dipped her bows in a sea. Then the spray began to beat upon the slanted canvas, and whipped Evelyn's face as she braced herself against the tiller.

The boat was sailing very fast, plunging through the sparkling ridges of water; there was something strangely exhilarating in her speed and the way the foam swirled past. Evelyn had an adventurous temperament, and, being then twenty-three, was young enough to find a keen relish in outdoor sport. Now she was matching her strength and skill against the blue Atlantic combers, which were getting steeper and frothing on their crests. The point was falling to leeward; it would be a fair wind home, and she determined to stand on a little longer. Casting a quick glance astern, she saw that the figures on the beach had grown indistinct and small. She felt alone with the sea at last, and the situation had its charm; but when she fixed her eyes ahead she wished that the rollers were not quite so large. She had to ease the boat over them; sometimes let the sheet run in the harder gusts, and then it was not easy to get the wet rope in.

When the point shut off the beach, she saw she must come round, and, after waiting for a patch of smooth water, put up the helm to jibe. The strain on the sheet was heavier than she thought; the rope bruised her fingers as it ran through them. The boat rolled wildly, and then the big sail swung over with a crash. Evelyn saw with alarm that the gaff along its head had stopped at an unusual angle to the canvas. Something had gone wrong. But her nerve was good. She

could lower the mainsail and run home under the jib.

When she left the helm the boat shot up into the wind, with the long boom banging to and fro and the spray flying across her. Evelyn loosed the halyards, but found that the gaff would not come down. Its end worked upon a brass slide on the mast, and the grips had bent and jambed. Things now looked awkward. It was blowing moderately fresh, the sea was getting up, and the sail she could not shorten might capsize the boat.

With difficulty, she got the sloop round, but, as the gaff was jambed, she would not steer a course that would take her to the inlet, and Evelyn remembered with alarm that there was some surf on the beach. She could swim, but she shrank from the thought of struggling ashore from the wrecked craft through broken water. Still, it was some comfort to see the point drop astern and the beach get nearer; she was on the way to land, there were boats on the inlet, and somebody might notice that she was in difficulties. No boat came off, however, and she realized that from a distance nothing might appear to be wrong with the sloop. When she was near enough to signal for help it would be too late.

A small steamer lurched at anchor not far away; but Evelyn could not reach her: the sloop was like a bird with a broken wing and could only blunder clumsily, in danger of capsizing, before the freshening wind. In another quarter of an hour she would be in the surf, which now looked dangerously heavy.

While she was trying to nerve herself for the struggle to land, she saw a boat leave the steamer's side. It was a very small dinghy, and there was only one man

on board, but he waved his hand as if he understood her peril, and then rowed steadily to intercept her. This needed judgment: if he miscalculated the distance it would be impossible for him to overtake the sloop. And Evelyn could do nothing to help. She must concentrate her attention upon keeping her craft before the wind. If she jibed, bringing the big sail violently over with its head held fast would result in a capsize.

Five minutes later she risked a glance. The dinghy was close at hand, lurching up and down, lost from sight at intervals among the combers. The man, coatless and hatless, seemed to be handling her with caution, easing her when a roller with a foaming crest bore down on him, but Evelyn thought he would not miss her boat. Her heart beat fast as she put the helm hard down. The sloop swung round, slackening speed as she came head to wind, there was a thud alongside, and the man jumped on board with a rope in his hand.

Then things began to happen so rapidly that the girl could not remember exactly what was done; but the man showed a purposeful activity. He scrambled along the narrow deck, got a few feet up the mast, and the sail came down; then he sprang aft to the helm, and the sloop headed for the steamer, with his dinghy in tow and only the jib set.

They were alongside in a few minutes, and he seized a rope that some one threw him.

"Our gig's hauled up on the beach for painting, and I'm afraid we couldn't reach the landing in the dinghy, now the sea's getting up," he said. "You'd better come on board, and I'll see if Macallister can put your gaff right."

Evelyn hesitated, for she suspected that it would take some time to mend the damaged spar. It was not an adventure her mother would approve of, but as she could see no way of reaching land, she let the man help her through the gangway.

CHAPTER IV

THE "ENCHANTRESS"

ON reaching the steamer's deck, Evelyn glanced with curiosity at her rescuer. He was a tall, lightly built man, dressed in an old blue shirt, paint-stained duck trousers, and ragged canvas shoes, but he had an easy manner that was not in harmony with his rough clothes. Evelyn liked his brown face. It had a hint of force in it; though now he was watching her with a half-amused smile. He fell short of being handsome, but, on the whole, his appearance made a good impression on the girl.

Then she looked about the vessel. The deck, finely laid with narrow planks, was littered with odd spars, rusty chain, coal bags, and pieces of greasy machinery, as if repairs and refitting were going on. She was a very small, two-masted steamer, carrying some sail, for smoke-grimed canvas was furled along the booms, and Evelyn thought she had been built for a yacht. Her narrow beam, her graceful sweep of teakwood rail, and the long, tapering counter suggested speed. A low, lead-gray funnel stood just forward of the main-mast, and a teak house, rising three or four feet above the deck, occupied part of her length. The brass boss of the steering wheel bore the name *Enchantress*. The after end of the house, however, was built of iron,

with raised lights in the top, and the hammering and the pointed remarks that came up indicated that somebody below was grappling with refractory metal. After one exclamation, Evelyn's companion walked to the skylights.

"Mack," he said in a warning tone, "there's a lady on board."

"One o' they half-dressed hussies from the hotel? Man, I thought ye had mair taste," a hoarse voice replied.

Evelyn was glad that her boating costume was not in the extreme of fashion, for sleeves and skirts were severely curtailed then, but she waited with some amusement.

"Come up and don't talk!" said the man who had brought her on board. "Here's a job for you."

"That's one thing I'll never die for the want of," the voice below went on. "I've got jobs enough already, and no help wi' them. Ye cannot make a mechanic out o' a dago muleteer, and the gangrel son o' a rich American is no' much better. They're wrecking the bonny mill and when I had them strike at a bit forging the weariful deevils smashed my finger. I telt them——"

"It won't stand for repeating. Let up; you've the voice of a bull," somebody broke in. "Grahame's waiting with a lady. Can't you get a move on?"

"What's the lady wanting—is it her watch mending?" the Scot asked with a hint of eagerness. A passion for tampering with the works of watches not infrequently characterizes the marine engineer.

"Come and see!" called Evelyn's companion; and a few moments later the mechanic appeared.

He was big, rather gaunt, and very dirty; but he carried himself well, and had obviously just put on a smart blue jacket with brass buttons that bore the crest of an English mail line. Evelyn thought his age was between forty and fifty, but his eyes had a humorous twinkle and his air was rakish. Behind him came a much younger man in greasy overalls.

The engineer bowed to Evelyn with some grace.

"Ye'll be Miss Cliffe; I ken ye by sight," he said. "They telt me who ye were in the bar at the hotel."

"Do they talk about me in such places?" Evelyn asked with a touch of haughtiness.

"What would ye expect? When ye're born good-looking, ye must take the consequences. But, as Grahame has nae manners, I'll present myself—Andrew Macallister, extra chief's ticket, and noo, through speaking my mind to a director, engineer o' this barge." He indicated his greasy companion. "Mr. Walthew, who, though ye might not think it by his look, was taught at Harvard. If my temper stands the strain, I may make a useful greaser o' him yet. The other ye nae doot ken."

"No," said Evelyn, half amused. "He kindly came to my help when I was in trouble with my boat."

"Then he's skipper. They call him Grahame, and it's a good Scottish name. But I was hoping ye had maybe some difficulty with your watch."

"Why did you hope so?" Evelyn asked, laughing.

"On no account let him have it," Walthew interposed. "He brought back the last watch a confiding visitor left him with the gold case badly crushed. 'I had to screw her in the vice, but a bit rub with a file will smooth her off,' he told the owner."

"He was a fastidious beast o' a Custom House grafter," Macallister explained. "But if it's no' a watch, what way can I serve ye?"

Grahame took him to the sloop and showed him the gaff, and a few minutes later he came back with the bent jaws.

"It's no' a bad piece o' work; your people have an eye for design, but they make things too light," he said. "Noo I'll cut ye a new grip out o' solid brass, but it will take an hour."

"I suppose I must wait; there's no other way of getting back," Evelyn answered dubiously.

Macallister went below, and Grahame put a deck chair for Evelyn under the awning in the stern, where he sat down on a coil of rope, while Walthew leaned against the rail near by. The girl felt interested in them all. She had heard that Walthew had been to Harvard, and his appearance suggested that he belonged to her own world. If so, what was he doing in the *Enchantress's* engine room? Then, Macallister's random talk had some piquancy. His manners were not polished, but they were good in their way.

"The steamer is yours, I suppose?" she remarked.

"Yes," said Grahame. "We bought her cheap, and are getting her ready for sea. As I dare say you have noticed, she needs refitting."

"But wouldn't that have been easier at New Orleans or Galveston?"

"Perhaps, if we were able to hire professional assistance, but we have to do the work ourselves, and this place is quiet, and clean for painting."

"Aren't you painting her an unusual color? White would have been prettier than this dingy gray."

"White's conspicuous," Walthew answered, and Evelyn noticed Grahame's warning glance. "A neutral tint stands better, and doesn't show the dirt. You see, we have to think of our pockets."

"Then it isn't to be a pleasure trip. Where are you going?"

"Up the Gulf Stream. To Cuba first, and then south and west; wherever there's a chance of trade."

"But the boat is very small. What do you think of trading in?"

"Anything that comes along," Walthew answered with a thoughtful air. "We might catch turtles, for example."

"One understands that turtles are now farmed for the market."

"It would be cheaper to catch them. We might get mahogany."

"But mahogany logs are big. You couldn't carry many."

"We could tow them in a raft. Then the English and American tourists who come out in the mail boats might charter us for trips."

"I'm afraid you'd find them exacting. They'd expect nice berths and a good table. Do you carry a good cook?"

Grahame chuckled and Walthew grinned.

"Modesty prevents my answering, because my partners leave me to put up the hash. I'll admit it might be better; but our passengers wouldn't find that out until we got them away at sea."

Evelyn was frankly amused. She could not imagine his cooking very well, but she liked his humorous candor.

"Your plans seem rather vague," she said.

"They are, but one doesn't want a cut and dried program for a cruise about the Spanish Main. One takes what comes along; in the old days it used to be rich plate ships and windfalls of that kind, and I guess there's still something to be picked up when you get off the liners' track. One expects to find adventures on the seas that Drake and Frobisher sailed."

Evelyn mused. She was shrewd enough to perceive that the men were hiding something, and they roused her curiosity, but she thought Walthew was right. Romance was not dead, and the Spanish Main was a name to conjure with. It brought one visions of desolate keys where treasure was hidden, the rush of the lukewarm Gulf Stream over coral reefs, of palm-fringed inlets up which the pinnaces had crept to cut out Spanish galleons, and of old white cities that the buccaneers had sacked. Tragic and heroic memories haunted that blue sea, and although luxurious mail boats plowed it now, the passions of the old desperados still burned in the hearts of men.

Walthew was smooth-faced, somewhat ingenuous, and marked by boyish humor, but Evelyn had noticed his athletic form, and thought he could be determined. He was no doubt proficient in sports that demanded strength and nerve. For all that, it was Grahame and his hawk-like look that her thoughts dwelt most upon, for something about him suggested that he had already found the adventures his comrade was seeking. He was a soldier of fortune, who had taken wounds and perhaps still bore their scars. She remembered the cool judgment he had shown when he came to her rescue.

Walthew disturbed her reflections.

"It will be some time before Andrew fixes your gaff, and there's no use in trying to hurry him," he said. "He's an artist in metal, and never lets up until he's satisfied with a job. So, as you must wait and we have a kettle on the forge below, I can offer you some tea and I'd like your opinion of the biscuit I've been baking for supper."

Evelyn felt doubtful. She was spending the afternoon in a way her mother would certainly not approve of, but she could not get ashore until the gaff was mended. Besides, it was pleasant to sit under the awning with the fresh sea breeze on her face and listen to the splash of the combers on the bows. Then she was interested in her companions. They were different from the rather vapid loungers she would have been talking to had she stayed at the hotel.

She let Walthew go and then turned to Grahame.

"Have you known your partner long?" she asked.

"No; I met him for the first time in New Orleans a few months ago."

"I asked because he's a type that I'm well acquainted with," Evelyn explained.

"And you would not have expected to find him cooking and cleaning engines on a boat like this?"

"No; they're rather unusual occupations for a conventionally brought up young American."

Grahame smiled.

"I understand that Walthew might have enjoyed all the comforts your civilization has to offer, but he preferred the sea. Perhaps I'm prejudiced, but I don't blame him. There's a charm in freedom and the wide horizon."

"Yes," she agreed thoughtfully, looking across the blue water; "I suppose that's true. If a man has the courage to break away, he can follow his bent. It's different with women. We're securely fenced in; our corral walls are high."

"They keep trouble out. Hardship and danger aren't pleasant things, and after a time the romance of the free-lance's life wears off. One sometimes looks longingly at the sheltered nooks that men with settled habits occupy."

"And yet you follow your star!"

"Star's too idealistic; my bent is better. What's born in one must have its way. This is perhaps most convenient when it's an inherited genius for making money."

"It's useful to oneself and others," Evelyn agreed. "But do these talents run in the blood?"

"It seems so," Grahame answered, and was quiet for a time, languidly watching the girl and wondering how far his statement was true.

It might be argued that the strongest family strains must be weakened by marriage, and their salient characteristics disappear in a few generations, but he felt strangely akin to the mosstroopers of his name who scourged the Scottish Border long ago. Their restlessness and lust of adventure were his. This, however, was not a matter of much consequence. Chance had thrown him into the company of a pretty and intelligent girl, and he must try to entertain her.

"You're fond of the sea and adventurous, or you wouldn't have driven that little sloop so far out under full sail," he said.

"Oh," she admitted, smiling, "that was partly be-

cause I wanted to show my skill and was ashamed to turn back when the breeze freshened."

Grahame laughed. He liked her frankness.

"After all," he said, "it's a feeling that drives a good many of us on. A weakness, perhaps, but it may be better than excessive caution."

"A matter of opinion. Of course, if you determine never to do anything foolish, you're apt to do nothing at all. But I'm afraid I can't throw much light upon these subjects. . . . Here comes our tea."

It was drinkable, but Evelyn thought the biscuit could undoubtedly have been better. For all that, she enjoyed the meal, and when it was over Macallister appeared with the mended gaff.

"I'm thinking yon will never bend or jamb," he said, indicating the beautifully finished pieces of brasswork.

Evelyn thanked him, and soon afterward Grahame helped her into the boat and hoisted the reefed sail. The wind was still fresh, but the sloop ran shoreward safely, with the sparkling seas ranging up on her quarter, and Grahame admired the grace of the neat, blue-clad figure at the helm. The rushing breeze and the flying spray had brought a fine color into the girl's face and a brightness to her eyes.

As they neared the beach, a gasolene launch came plunging out to meet them, and Evelyn laughed as she turned to Grahame.

"I've been missed at last," she said. "That's my father coming to look for me."

The launch swung round close alongside and Grahame recognized that he was being subjected to a keen scrutiny by a man on board. The broken wa-

ter, however, made explanations impossible, and the launch followed the sloop to the inlet, where Evelyn neatly brought the craft up to the landing. On getting ashore, she spoke to Cliffe, and he thanked Grahame and invited him to the hotel. Grahame politely declined, but agreed to borrow the launch to take him on board.

As he was leaving, Evelyn held out her hand.

"It was fortunate that my difficulties began when I was near your boat, and I don't altogether regret them. I have spent a pleasant afternoon," she said.

Grahame bowed and turned away; but somewhat to his surprise, he found his thoughts return to his guest as the launch carried him back to the steamer. The girl was cultured and intelligent, perhaps a little romantic, and unspoiled by luxury; but this was nothing to him. There were times when he felt lonely and outcast from his kind, for until he met Walthew his comrades had generally been rough and broken men. Some years ago he had been a favorite with well-bred women; but he never met them on terms of friendship now. He was poor, and would no doubt remain so, since he had not the gift of making money; but an untrammeled, wandering life had its advantages.

With a smile at his brief relapse into sentiment, he resolved to forget Miss Cliffe; but he found it strangely difficult to occupy his mind with calculations about stores for the coming voyage.

Evelyn related her adventure to her mother, who listened with strong disapproval. Mrs. Cliffe was a thin, keen-eyed woman, with social ambitions and some skill in realizing them.

"If you hadn't been so rash as to go out alone, this

wouldn't have happened," she remarked. "You must really be more careful."

"I couldn't prevent the gaff's jambing," Evelyn replied.

"That is not what I meant. After all, nobody in the hotel knows much about the matter, and there is, of course, no need to do more than bow to the men if you meet them at the landing, though it would be better to avoid this, if possible. A small favor of the kind they did you does not justify their claiming your acquaintance."

"Father wanted to bring one of them here."

"Your father is a man of business, and has very little discretion in social matters," Mrs. Cliffe replied. "If Reggie cannot go with you, take the hotel boatman when you next go sailing."

Evelyn did not answer, but she disagreed with the views her mother had expressed, and she resolved to leave Reggie ashore. For one thing, he was not of much use in a boat. Yet it was curious that she had once been pleased to take him out.

CHAPTER V

THE CALL OF THE UNKNOWN

THE sea breeze had fallen, and the air was hot and still. A full moon rested low in the eastern sky, and against its light the tops of the royal palms cut in feathery silhouette. Evelyn was sitting in the hotel garden with Reginald Gore. A dusky rose arbor hid them from the veranda, where a number of the guests had gathered, but Evelyn imagined that one or two of the women knew where she was and envied her. This once would have afforded her some satisfaction, but it did not matter now, and although the spot seemed made for confidential talk, she listened quietly to the rollers breaking on the beach. The roar of the surf had a disturbing effect; she felt that it called, urging her to follow her star and launch out on the deep. Her companion was silent, and she wondered what he was thinking about, or if, as seemed more likely, his mind was vacant. She found him irritating to-night.

Gore was the finished product of a luxurious age: well-bred, well-taught, and tastefully dressed. His father had made a fortune out of railroad stock, and although Reginald had not the ability to increase it, he spent it with prudence. He had a good figure, and a pleasant face, but Evelyn suspected that his highest ambition was to lounge through life gracefully.

Evelyn knew her mother's plans regarding him, and had, to some extent, fallen in with them. Reggie had much that she valued to offer, but she now and then found him tiresome. He stood for the luxurious, but, in a sense, artificial life, with which she was growing dissatisfied. She felt that she wanted stirring, and must get into touch with the real things.

"You're not talkative," she remarked, watching the lights of the *Enchantress* that swung and blinked with the tossing swell.

"No," he agreed good-humoredly. "Doesn't seem to be much to talk about."

There was silence for a few moments; then Evelyn put into words a train of thoughts that was forming indistinctly in her mind.

"You have never done anything very strenuous in life. You have had all the pleasure money can provide one. Are you content?"

"On the whole, yes. Aren't you?"

"No," said Evelyn thoughtfully. "I believe I haven't really been content for a long time, but I didn't know it. The mind can be doped, but the effect wears off and you feel rather startled when you come to yourself."

Gore nodded.

"I know! Doesn't last, but it's disturbing. When I feel like that, I take a soothing drink."

Evelyn laughed, for his answer was characteristic. He understood, to some extent, but she did not expect him to sympathize with the restlessness that had seized her. Reggie would never do anything rash or unconventional. Hitherto she had approved his caution. She had enjoyed the comfortable security of her sta-

tion, had shared her mother's ambitions, and looked upon marriage as a means of rising in the social scale. Her adventurous temperament had found some scope in exciting sports and in an occasional flirtation that she did not carry far; but she was now beginning to feel that life had strange and wonderful things to offer those who had the courage to seize them. She had never experienced passion—perhaps because her training had taught her to dread it; but her imagination was now awake.

Her visit to the *Enchantress* had perhaps had something to do with these disturbing feelings, but not, she argued, because she was sentimentally attracted by her rescuer. It was the mystery in which Grahame's plans were wrapped that was interesting. He was obviously the leader of the party and about to engage in some rash adventure on seas the buccaneers had sailed. This, of course, was nothing to her; but thinking of him led her to wonder whether she might not miss much by clinging too cautiously to what she knew was safe.

With a soft laugh she turned to Gore.

"Tell me about the dance they're getting up. I hear you are one of the stewards," she said.

It was a congenial topic, and as she listened to her companion's talk Evelyn felt that she was being drawn back to secure, familiar ground.

Cliffe, in the meanwhile, had come out in search of her and, seeing how she was engaged, had strolled into the hotel bar. A tall, big-boned man, dressed in blue serge with brass buttons on his jacket, was talking at large, and Cliffe, stopping to listen, thought the tales he told with dry Scottish humor were good.

"You are the engineer who mended the gaff of my daughter's boat," Cliffe said. "I must thank you for that; it was a first-rate job."

"It might have been worse," Macallister modestly replied. "Are ye a mechanic then?"

"No; but I know good work when I see it."

"I'm thinking that's a gift, though ye may not use it much. It's no' good work the world's looking for."

"True," agreed Cliffe; "perhaps we're too keen on what will pay."

"Ye mean what will pay the first user. An honest job is bound to pay somebody in the end."

"Well, I guess that's so. You're a philosopher."

Macallister grinned.

"I have been called worse names, and maybe with some cause. Consistency gets monotonous. It's better to be a bit of everything, as the humor takes ye."

"What kind of engines has your boat?" Cliffe asked. He was more at home when talking practical matters.

"As fine a set o' triples as I've clapped my eyes upon, though they have been shamefully neglectit."

"And what speed can you get out of her?"

"A matter o' coal," Macallister answered with a twinkle. "A seven-knot bat will suit our purse best."

Cliffe saw that further questions on this point would be injudicious, but the man interested him, and he noted the flag on his buttons.

"Well," he said, "the *Enchantress* must be a change from the liners you have sailed in."

"I find that. But there's aye some compensation. I have tools a man can work with, and oil that will keep her running smooth. Ye'll maybe ken there's a difference in engine stores."

"I've heard my manufacturing friends say something of the kind."

Cliffe ordered refreshment, and quietly studied his companion. The man had not the reserve he associated with the Scot, but a dash and a reckless humor, which are, nevertheless, essentially Scottish too. Cliffe wondered curiously what enterprise he and his companions were engaged upon, but he did not think Macallister would tell him. If the others were like this fellow, he imagined that they would carry out their plans, for he read resolution as well as daring in the Scot's character; besides, he had been favorably impressed by Grahame.

After some further talk, Macallister left, and Cliffe joined his wife and daughter.

The next morning, Evelyn, getting up before most of the other guests, went out on the balcony in front of her room and looked across the bay. The sun was not yet hot, and a fresh breeze flecked the blue water with feathery streaks of white, while the wet beach glistened dazzlingly. There was a refreshing, salty smell, and for a few minutes the girl enjoyed the grateful coolness; then she felt that something was missing from the scene, and noticed that the *Enchantress* had vanished. The adventurers had sailed in the night. On the whole she was conscious of relief. They had gone and she could now get rid of the restlessness that their presence had caused. After all, there was peril in the longing for change; it was wiser to be satisfied with the security and solid comfort which surrounded her.

Looking down at a footstep, she saw Gore strolling about the lawn, faultlessly dressed in light flannel, with

a Panama hat. There was not a crease in his clothes that was out of place; the color scheme was excellent—even his necktie was exactly the right shade. He stood for all her mother had taught her to value: wealth, leisure, and cultivated taste. Reggie was a man of her own kind; she had nothing in common with the bronzed, tar-stained Grahame, whose hawk-like look had for the moment stirred her imagination.

"You look like the morning," Gore called up to her. "Won't you come down and walk to the beach? The sun and breeze are delightful, and we'll have them all to ourselves."

Evelyn noticed the hint of intimacy, but it did not jar upon her mood, and she smiled as she answered that she would join him.

A few minutes later, they walked along the hard, white sand, breathing the keen freshness of the spray.

"What made you get up so soon?" Evelyn asked.

"It's not hard to guess. I was waiting for my opportunity. You're in the habit of rising in good time."

"Well," she said with a bantering air, "I think waiting for opportunities is a habit of yours. Of course, you have some excuse for this."

Gore looked puzzled for a moment and then laughed.

"I see what you mean. As a rule, the opportunities come to me."

"Don't they? I wonder whether you're much happier than the men who have to make, or look for, them."

"I can't say, because I haven't tried that plan. I can't see why I should look for anything, when I don't have to. Anyway, I guess I'm a pretty cheerful person and easy to get on with. It's the strivers who're

always getting after something out of reach that give you jars."

"You're certainly not a striver," Evelyn agreed. "However, you seem to have all a man could want."

"Not quite," he answered. "I'll confess that I'm not satisfied yet, but I try to make the most of the good things that come along—and I'm glad I got up early. It's a glorious morning!"

Evelyn understood. Reggie was not precipitate and feared a rebuff. She believed that she could have him when she liked, but he would look for some tactful sign of her approval before venturing too far. The trouble was that she did not know if she wanted him.

She changed the subject, and they paced the beach, engaged in good-humored banter, until the breakfast gong called them back to the hotel.

In the afternoon, however, Evelyn's mood changed again. The breeze died away and it was very hot. Everybody was languid, and she found her friends dull. Although Gore tried to be amusing, his conversation was unsatisfactory; and the girls about the hotel seemed more frivolous and shallow than usual. None of these people ever did anything really worth while! Evelyn did not know what she wished to do, but she felt that the life she led was unbearably stale.

When dark fell and the deep rumble of the surf filled the air, she sat with her father in a quiet corner of the garden.

"Didn't you say you might make a short business trip to the West Indies?" she asked him.

"Yes; I may have to spend a week in Havana."

"Then I wish you would take me."

"It might be arranged," said Cliffe. He seldom

refused her anything. "Your mother wouldn't come, but she has plenty of engagements at home. Why do you want to go?"

Evelyn found this hard to answer, but she tried to formulate her thoughts.

"Cuba is, of course, a new country to me, and I suppose we all feel a mysterious attraction toward what is strange. Had you never a longing for something different, something out of the usual run?"

"I had when I was young."

"But you don't feel it now?"

"One learns to keep such fancies in their place when business demands it," Cliffe answered with a dry smile. "I can remember times when I wanted to go off camping in the Canadian Rockies and join a canoe trip on Labrador rivers. Now and then in the hot weather the traffic in the markets and the dusty offices make me tired. I'll confess that I've felt the snow-peaks and the rapids call."

"We went to Banff once," said Evelyn. "It was very nice."

"But not the real thing! You saw the high peaks from the hotel garden and the passes from an observation car. Then we made one or two excursions with pack-horses, guides, and people like ourselves, where it was quite safe to go. That was as much as your mother could stand for. She'd no sympathy with my hankering after the lone trail."

Evelyn could see his face in the moonlight, and she gave him a quick look. Her father, it seemed, had feelings she had never suspected in him.

"But if you like the mountains, couldn't you enjoy them now?"

"No," he said, rather grimly. "The grip of my business grows tighter all the time. It costs a good deal to live as we do, and I must keep to the beaten tracks that lead to places where money is made."

"I sometimes think we are too extravagant and perhaps more ostentatious than we need be," Evelyn said in a diffident tone.

"We do what our friends expect and your mother has been accustomed to. Then it's my pleasure to give my daughter every advantage I can and, when the time for her to leave us comes, to see she starts fair."

Evelyn was silent for a few moments, feeling touched. She had formed a new conception of her father, who, she had thought, loved the making of money for its own sake. Now it was rather startling to find that in order to give her mother and herself all they could desire, he had held one side of his nature in subjection and cheerfully borne a life of monotonous toil.

"I don't want to leave you," she said in a gentle voice.

He looked at her keenly, and she saw that her mother had been speaking to him about Gore.

"Well," he responded, "I want to keep you as long as possible, but when you want to go I must face my loss and make the best of it. In the meanwhile, we'll go to Cuba if your mother consents."

Evelyn put her hand affectionately on his arm.

"Whatever happens," she said softly, "you won't fail me. I'm often frivolous and selfish, but it's nice to know I have somebody I can trust."

CHAPTER VI

ON THE SPANISH MAIN

THERE had been wind, but it had fallen toward evening, and the *Enchantress* rolled in a flat calm when her engines stopped. As she swung with the smooth undulations, blocks clattered, booms groaned, and the water in her bilges swirled noisily to and fro. It was difficult to move about the slanted deck, and two dark-skinned, barefooted seamen were seated forward with their backs against the rail. A comrade below was watching the engine fires and, with the exception of her Spanish helmsman, this was all the paid crew the *Enchantress* carried.

She drifted east with the Gulf Stream. Around her there hung a muggy atmosphere pervaded with a curious, hothouse smell. Grahame stood in the channels, heaving the lead. He found deep water, but white patches on the northern horizon, where the expanse of sea was broken by spouts of foam, marked a chain of reefs and keys that rose a foot or two above the surface. A larger streak of white was fading into the haze astern, but Grahame had carefully taken its compass bearings, because dusk, which comes suddenly in the Bahama Channel, was not far away. He dropped the lead on deck, and joined Macallister, who stood in the engine-room doorway rubbing his hands with cotton waste.

"No sign o' that steamboat yet?" the Scot asked.

"It's hazy to the east," said Grahame. "We mightn't see her until she's close if they're not making much smoke. Still, she ought to have turned up last night."

"She'll come. A tornado wouldna' stop her skipper when he had freight to collect; but ye were wise in no' paying it in advance."

"You haven't seen the fellow."

"I've seen his employers," Macallister replied with a chuckle. "Weel I ken what sort o' man would suit them. Gang canny when ye meet him, and see ye get the goods before ye sign the bill o' lading."

"I mean to take precautions. No first-class firm would touch our business."

"Verra true. And when ye find men who're no' particular about one thing, ye cannot expect them to be fastidious about another. When I deal wi' yon kind, I keep my een open."

"Where's Walthew?"

Macallister grinned.

"Asleep below, wi' his hair full o' coal-dust, looking more like a nigger than the son o' a rich American. Human nature's a verra curious thing, but if he can stand another month, I'll hae hope o' him."

"I think the lad's right. He wants to run his life on his own lines, and he is willing to pay for testing them by experience."

Grahame, glancing forward, suddenly became intent, for in one spot a dingy smear thickened the haze. It slowly grew more distinct, and he gave a seaman a quick order before he turned to his companion.

"That must be the *Miranda*. You can start your mill as soon as we have launched the dinghy."

By the time the boat was in the water the steamer had crept out of the mist. She came on fast: a small, two-masted vessel, with a white wave beneath her full bows and a cloud of brown smoke trailing across the sea astern. She was light, floating high above the water, which washed up and down her wet side as she rolled. A few heads projected over the iron bulwark near the break of the forecastle, and two men in duck stood on the bridge. Studying them through the glasses, Grahame saw they had an unkempt appearance, and he was not prepossessed in favor of the one whom he took to be the captain.

He rang the telegraph, and when the engines stopped he jumped into the dinghy with Walthew and one of the seamen. Five minutes later, they ceased rowing close to the steamer's side, which towered high above them, red with rust along the water-line. The black paint was scarred and peeling higher up, the white deckhouses and boats had grown dingy, and there was about her a poverty-stricken look. The boat swung sharply up and down a few lengths away, for the sea broke about the descending rows of iron plates as the vessel rolled.

"*Enchantress,* ahoy!" shouted one of the men on her bridge. "This is the *Miranda.* S'pose you're ready for us?"

"We've been ready for you since last night," Grahame replied.

"Then you might have got your gig over. We can't dump the stuff into that cockleshell."

"You can't," Grahame agreed. "The gig's hardly big enough either, and I won't risk her alongside in the swell that's running."

"Then what do you expect me to do? Wait until it's smooth?"

"No," said Grahame; "we'll have wind soon. You'll have to take her in behind the reef, as your owners arranged. It's not far off and you'll find good anchorage in six fathoms."

"And lose a day! What do you think your few cases are worth to us?"

"The freight agreed upon," Grahame answered coolly. "You can't collect it until you hand our cargo over. I'll take you in behind the reef and bring you out in three or four hours. There'll be a good moon."

The skipper seemed to consult with the man beside him, and then waved his hand.

"All right! Go ahead with your steamer and show us the way."

"I'd better come on board," Grahame answered. "It's an awkward place to get into, but I know it well."

A colored seaman threw them down a rope ladder, and, pulling in cautiously, Grahame waited until the rolling hull steadied, when he jumped. Walthew followed, and in a few moments they stood on the *Miranda's* deck. Walthew had been wakened when the boat was launched, and he had not had much time to dress, but he wore a fairly clean duck jacket over his coaly shirt. His bare feet were thrust into greasy slippers, and smears of oil darkened the hollows round his eyes.

One or two slouching deckhands watched the new arrivals with dull curiosity, and a few more were busy forward opening the hatch. Grahame thought the vessel a rather unfavorable specimen of the small, cheaply run tramp, but when he reached the hatch the skipper

came up. He was a little man with a bluff manner, a hard face, and cunning eyes.

"They'll have the cover off in a minute and you can see your stuff," he said, and called to a man with a lantern: "Stand by with the light!"

When the tarpaulin was rolled back, Grahame went down with a mate and counted the wooden cases pointed out to him. After this, he examined their marks and numbers and, going up, declared himself satisfied.

"Now," said the skipper, "you can take us in; the sooner the better, because it will be dark before long. Would you like a drink before you start?"

Grahame said that he would wait until he had finished his work. He followed the skipper to the bridge, and rang the telegraph.

The *Miranda* went ahead, her propeller hurling up the foam as it flapped round with half the blades out of the water, while the *Enchantress* crept slowly up her froth-streaked wake. Grahame, standing at the wheelhouse door, was glad that Walthew had come with him, although this reduced his vessel's crew. Macallister, however, was capable of managing his engines without assistance, for a time, and could be trusted to take charge of the *Enchantress* if necessary, for Grahame did not think the hands would give him trouble. One was a Canary Spaniard, whom they had picked up at Matanzas, a very simple and, Grahame thought, honest fellow; the other three were stupid but apparently good-humored half-breeds. Grahame would have preferred white seamen but for the danger of their getting into trouble in parts where wine was cheap and perhaps betraying the object of the voyage

in drunken boasts. His business would not bear talking about—and that was why he distrusted the *Miranda's* captain.

The moon rose before the short twilight had changed to dark, and the steamer moved on across the dimly glittering sea, until a long white line grew plainer ahead. As they drew near, the line could be seen to waver, gaining breadth and distinctness and then fading, while a dull roar which had a regular beat in it mingled with the thud of the engines. Though the *Miranda* rolled and plunged, the surface of the water was smooth as oil, and in the deep calm the clamor of the surf had an ominous sound. Then another white patch appeared to starboard, and a few moments later, a third to port.

The captain was pacing up and down his bridge.

"It's a puzzling light," he said, stopping near Grahame with a frown. "I suppose you do know the place?"

"Oh, yes," said Grahame carelessly. "We made a rough survey and took soundings. But slow her down and use your lead if you like."

"That's what I mean to do," the captain replied.

He rang the telegraph, and when the beat of engines slackened a man stood on a footboard outside the bridge, where a broad canvas belt was fastened round his waist. Whirling the heavy plummet round his head, he let it shoot forward to the break of the forecastle, and steadied the line a moment when it ran vertically up and down.

"By the deep, eight!" he called.

"Starboard!" said Grahame, and there was silence except for the rumble of the surf, while the quarter-

master turned his wheel in the glass-fronted house.

In a few minutes the lead plunged down again.

"By the mark, seven!" was announced.

The captain gave Grahame a quick glance, and then looked ahead, where there was something to occupy him, for at regular intervals the sea was torn apart and a spout of foam and a cloud of spray shot up. Moreover, the vessel was heading directly toward the dangerous spot. It was not needful for Grahame to take her so close as he meant to do, but he had reasons for letting the nearness of the reef appeal to the captain's imagination.

"And a quarter six!" the leadsman called.

The captain grasped the telegraph.

"If you mean to go any closer, I'll stop her and back out!" he said. "Then you can tranship your goods outside or I'll take them on, as you like."

"We can let her come round now," Grahame answered, and beckoned to the quartermaster. "Starboard. Steady at that!"

The *Miranda* swung until the frothy confusion on the reef, where the swell broke in cascades of phosphorescent flame, bore abeam, and then a similar troubled patch grew plain on the opposite bow. There was, however, a smooth, dark strip between, and she followed it, shouldering off a spangled wash, with the propeller beating slow. Ahead, a low, hazy blur rose out of the sea, and when Grahame spoke to the captain the windlass began to clank and indistinct figures became busy on the forecastle. Then a gray strip of sand came into sight, and Grahame nodded to the anxious captain.

"You can let go here, but don't give her much cable."

The anchor splashed from the bows, there was a roar of running chain, the throb of the screw slowly turning astern, and a screaming of startled birds. She brought up, the noise died away, and the silence was emphasized by the clamor of the surf on the opposite shore of the key. The captain looked about with a frown, for the desolation of the spot and the nearness of the reefs had their effect on him.

"Hail them to get your gig over at once, and then we'll have a drink," he said.

Macallister answered Grahame's shout, for the *Enchantress* had anchored close astern, and the boat was hanging from her davits when he followed the captain into his room. The vessels rolled lazily and the swell broke with a languid splash upon the beach, for the bight was sheltered by the reefs. The small room was lighted by an oil lamp and was very hot. A pilot coat, damp with salt, and a suit of oilskins swung to and fro across the bulkhead, and a pair of knee-boots stood in a corner. Two or three bad photographic portraits were tacked against the teakwood paneling, but except for these, all that the room contained suggested stern utility.

Unlocking a cupboard, the captain took a bottle and some glasses from a rack, and Walthew coughed as he tasted the fiery spirit.

"That's powerful stuff, but the flavor's good," he said with an attempt at politeness.

A big, greasy man who the captain informed the others was Mr. James, his chief engineer, came in. He sat down with his feet on the locker, and helped himself liberally to the spirits. In the meanwhile the captain put an inkstand on the small folding table.

"You have the bill of lading; endorse it that you've got delivery, and I'll give you a receipt for the freight."

Grahame glanced at Walthew, who sat nearest the door, and the lad looked out.

"The gig's alongside, ready for the cases," he said.

"We'll heave them up as soon as we've finished this business," the captain replied.

Grahame wrote a check and put it on the table with some American paper currency.

"Your owners have satisfied themselves that this will be met; I thought I'd better keep the other amount separate."

"That's all right," the captain returned; "but you're a hundred dollars short."

"I guess you're mistaken," Walthew said. "We've paid the freight, and a bonus to yourself, as we promised because it was an awkward job. What else do you want?"

"A bonus for the engineer," the greasy mechanic answered with a grin.

"Precisely," said the captain.

"Then I'm afraid you'll be disappointed," Grahame said, and Walthew picked up the check, which still lay on the table.

There was silence for a few moments while the *Miranda's* officers looked hard at their visitors. Grahame's face was impassive, but there was a gleam of amusement in Walthew's eyes.

"Now, you listen to me," said the captain. "Mr. James is entitled to his share, and he means to get it. You don't suppose he'd take a hand in a risky job like this entirely for the benefit of the owners?"

"Mr. James," said Walthew, "runs no risk that I

can see. However, if you think he has a right to something, you can divide with him."

"No, sir! What you have given me is mine. But there's another point you've overlooked. The crew expect a few dollars, and it might be wise to satisfy them."

Grahame smiled.

"They certainly struck me as a hard crowd; but seamen don't rob cargo-shippers nowadays. Then it's difficult to imagine that you told them what's in the cases. In fact, the way they obeyed your mate suggested that there's not much liking between men and officers on board this packet. If there was any trouble, I don't know that they'd take your side."

The captain frowned; and James drained his glass again and then struck the table.

"Think something of yourselves, I reckon, but we've come out on top with smarter folks than you. Put down your money like gentlemen, and say no more."

"It's good advice," the captain added meaningly.

"Guess we disagree," Walthew said, putting the check into his pocket. "You haven't got your freight payment yet."

"Do you think you can keep that check?"

"Well," said Walthew coolly, "we could cable the bank to stop payment from the nearest port. For that matter, I'm not certain that you could take it back."

"We're willing to try," the big engineer scowled.

"And you don't get the goods until we're satisfied," the captain added.

"May I ask what you would do with the cases? They're consigned to us, and you'd have some trouble in passing them through a foreign customs house.

They open things and inspect the contents when the duty's high."

"We could dump them overboard. Better do the fair thing by us and get delivery."

"I don't think we're unfair," Walthew replied. "We engaged with your owners to pay a stipulated freight, and added a bonus for the skipper. Now we put down the money and want our goods."

"The winch that heaves them up doesn't start without my order," James said with an ugly laugh.

Grahame turned to the captain with a gesture of weariness.

"We don't seem to get much farther! I suspect you've forgotten something. How much a day does it cost you to run this ship?"

"What has that got to do with it?" the captain asked curtly.

"Well," said Grahame coolly, "there's a risk of your stopping here for some time. It's an awkward place to get out of unless you know it well; particularly when it's blowing fresh. The Northers hardly reach so far, but they unsettle the weather, and when the wind's from seaward a strong eddy stream runs through the bight. Perhaps you may have noticed that the glass is falling fast."

The captain looked disturbed; but he was not to be beaten so easily.

"You don't get back on board your boat until you've taken us out!" he threatened.

"I can take you out to-night, but if you miss your chance and have to wait we can afford it best. Our expenses aren't heavy, but you'll have to account to your owners for the delay that won't cost us much.

Besides, you'd be forced to keep steam up in case she dragged; it's bad holding ground."

There was silence for a few moments, and then the captain made a sign of surly acquiescence.

"Very well; we won't argue about the bonus. Give me the check."

"I think we'll wait until the cases are transhipped," Walthew said with a smile.

"Give them steam for the winch, Mr. James," the captain ordered; and the engineer slouched away.

The winch began to rattle and an hour or two later Grahame went up to the bridge while the anchor was broken out. When the men were stowing it the engines throbbed and the *Miranda* turned her head toward open water. In another half hour the propeller stopped and the captain turned to his guests with a grin as the *Enchantress's* gig came alongside.

"I expect the dagoes you're shipping those rifles for will find you hard to beat," he said.

CHAPTER VII

MANGROVE CREEK

THERE was not a ripple on the sea when the *Enchantress,* steaming slowly, closed with the coast. The glittering water broke with a drowsy murmur at her bows and turned from silver to a deep blue in the shadow of the hull; her wake was marked by silky whirls on the back of the swell. It was four o'clock in the afternoon, the sea flung back a dazzling light, and Grahame's eyes ached as he searched the approaching land with his glasses.

Far back, blue mountains loomed through haze and the foreground was blurred and dim. One could not tell where the low expanse began or ended, though a broad, dark fringe, which Grahame knew was forest, conveyed some idea of distance. In one or two spots, a streak of white indicated surf upon a point, but the picture was flooded with a glare in which separate objects lost distinctness. Blue and gray and silver melted into one another without form or salient line.

Grahame put down the glasses and turned to the seaman near him. Miguel was getting old, but his tall figure was strong, and he stood, finely posed, with a brown hand on the wheel. His face was rugged, but he had clear, blue eyes that met one with a curious child-like gaze. He was barefooted and his thin cot-

ton trousers and canvas jacket were spotlessly clean, though Grahame imagined he had made the latter out of a piece of old awning they had meant to throw away.

"You come from the Canaries, don't you, Miguel?" Grahame asked in Castilian. "It is not so hot there."

"From San Sebastian, señor, where the trade-breeze blows and the date-palms grow. My house stands among the tuna-figs beside the mule-track to the mountains."

"Then you have a house? Who takes care of it while you are away?"

"My señora. She packs the tomatoes they send to England. It is hard work and one earns a peseta a day."

"Then why did you leave her?" Grahame asked, for he knew that a peseta, which is equal to about twenty cents, will not buy much of the coarse maize-flour the Canary peasants live upon.

"There came a great tempest, and when my three boats were wrecked something must be done. My sons were drawn for the navy; they had no money to send. For years, señor, I was captain of a schooner fishing *bacalao* on the African coast, and when I came home to catch tunny for the Italian factory things went very well. Then the gale swept down from the peaks one night and in the morning the boats were matchwood on the reef."

"Ah!" said Grahame. He could sympathize, for he too had faced what at the time had seemed to be overwhelming disaster. "So you sailed to look for better fortune somewhere else? You hope to go back to San Sebastian some day?"

"If my saint is kind. But perhaps it is well that he is a very great angel, for fortune is not always found when one looks for it at sea."

There was no irony in Miguel's answer; his manner was quietly dignified. Indeed, though he had been taught nothing except rudimentary seamanship, he had the bearing of a fine gentleman.

"Wages are good in English and American ships," Grahame resumed, feeling that he was guilty of impertinence. "Sometimes you are able to send the señora a few dollars?"

"I send all but a little to buy clothes when I go where it is cold, and my señora buries the money to buy another boat if it is permitted that I return. Once or twice a year comes a letter, written by the priest, and I keep it until I find a man who can read it to me."

Grahame was touched. There was something pathetic in the thought of this untaught exile's patiently carrying the precious letters until he met somebody who could read his language.

"Well," he said, "if things go well with us, you will get a bonus besides your wages, which should make it easier for you to go home. But you understand there is danger in what we may have to do."

Miguel smiled.

"Señor, there is always danger on the sea."

Grahame turned and saw Walthew standing in the engine-room door. He wore dirty overalls and a singlet torn open at the neck, there was a smear of oil across his face, and his hands were black and scarred.

"What on earth have you been doing?" Grahame asked.

"Lying on my back for two hours, trying to put a new packing in the gland of a pump."

"Well, who would have predicted a year ago that you would be amusing yourself this way now!"

Walthew laughed.

"Do you know where we are?" he asked.

"I imagine we're not far off the creek; in fact, we might risk making the signal smoke. It will be dark enough to head inshore in a few hours."

"Then we'll get to work with the fires," said Walthew, promptly disappearing below.

Soon afterward, a dense black cloud rose from the funnel and, trailing away behind the *Enchantress,* spread across the sky. Grahame knew that it might be seen by unfriendly watchers, but other steamers sometimes passed the point for which he was steering. After a while he signaled for less steam, and only a faint, widening ripple marked the *Enchantress's* passage through the water as she closed obliquely with the land. It was still blurred, and in an hour Grahame stopped the engines and took a cast of the lead. Dark would come before long, when, if they had reached the right spot, signals would be made. In the meanwhile it would be imprudent to venture nearer.

Walthew and one of the seamen set out a meal on deck and when it was eaten they lounged on the stern grating, smoking and waiting. There was dangerous work before them; and, to make things worse, it must be done in the dark, because the moon now shone in the daytime. It was very hot, and a steamy, spicy smell drifted off the coast, which grew less distinct as the darkness settled down. A faint rumble of surf reached them from an unseen beach, rising and falling with a

rhythm in it. The black smoke had been stopped and thin gray vapor rose straight up from the funnel. The quietness and the suspense began to react upon the men's nerves; they felt impatient and highly strung, but they talked as carelessly as they could.

Then in the quietness the roar of the sea on sandy shoals reached them ominously clear. Grahame glanced shoreward, but could see nothing, for the sun had gone and a thin mist was spreading across the low littoral.

"We're drifting inshore," he said. "As soon as I get four fathoms we'll steam out. Try a cast of the lead."

Walthew swung the plummet and they heard it strike the sea.

"Half a fathom to the good," he called as he coiled up the wet line. Then he stopped, looking toward the land. "What's that?" he said. "Yonder, abreast of the mast?"

A twinkling light appeared in the mist and grew brighter.

"A fire, I think," Grahame answered quietly. "Still, one's not enough."

A second light began to glimmer, and soon another farther on.

Macallister chuckled.

"Ye're a navigator. Our friends are ready. I've seen many a worse landfall made by highly-trained gentlemen with a big mail company's buttons."

"A lucky shot; but you had better stand by below. Start her easy."

He blew three blasts on the whistle, and the fires went out while the *Enchantress* moved slowly shore-

ward through the gloom. Miguel held the wheel and Grahame stood near by, watching the half-breed who swung the lead. Presently another light twinkled, and, listening hard, Grahame heard the splash of paddles. Stopping the engines, he waited until a low, gray object crept out of the mist and slid toward the steamer's side. Ropes were thrown and when the canoe was made fast the first of the men who came up ceremoniously saluted Grahame.

"You bring the goods all right?" he asked.

"They're ready. If it makes no difference, I'd rather wait until to-morrow before delivering them. I understand the beach is mostly mangrove swamp, and it's a dark night to take the steamer up the creek."

"To-morrow she be seen; the coast is watch by spy," said the other in his quaint English; then indicated his companion. "Dese man he takes her anywhere."

Grahame hesitated.

Secrecy was essential, and if he waited for daylight and was seen by watchers who had noticed the smoke in the afternoon he might not have an opportunity for landing another cargo. For all that, knowing nothing about his pilot's skill, he imagined he ran some risk of grounding if he took the steamer in. Risks, however, could not be avoided.

"Very well," he decided. "Send him to the wheel."

He kept the lead going as the *Enchantress* crept forward, and was relieved to find that the water got no shallower. It looked as if the pilot were following a channel, for the wash of the sea on hidden shoals began to rise from both sides. Except for this and the measured throb of the engines, there was deep silence, but after a while the vessel, which had been rolling

gently, grew steady, and Grahame thought he could hear the water she threw off splash upon a beach. He looked about eagerly, but there was nothing to be seen. This creeeping past invisible dangers was daunting, but he felt comforted as he glanced at the motionless, dark figure at the helm. The fellow showed no hesitation; it was obvious that he knew his business.

Through the darkness low trees loomed up ahead, and shortly afterward another clump abeam. Mist clung about them, there was not much space between, and the absence of any gurgle at the bows indicated that the *Enchantress* was steaming up the inlet with the tide. The lead showed sufficient water, but Grahame had misgivings, for the creek seemed to be getting narrower. It was, however, too late to turn back; he must go on and trust to luck.

Some time later a light appeared among the trees, and the pilot ordered the engines to be stopped. Then he pulled the helm over and waved his hand as the *Enchantress* swung inshore.

"La ancla!" he cried. "Let her go!"

There was a splash and a sharp rattle of chain, and when the *Enchantress* stopped the beat of paddles came out of the gloom. Then the cargo-lamp was lighted and in a few minutes a group of men climbed on board. Some were dusky half-breeds, but two or three seemed to be of pure Spanish extraction. Grahame took these below, where they carefully examined the cases. When they were satisfied they followed him to the deck-cabin, and Walthew brought them some wine. One man gave Grahame a check on an American bank, and shortly afterward the work of getting up the cargo began.

Everybody became suddenly busy. Shadowy figures dragged the cases about the shallow hold and fixed the slings. Dark-skinned men, dripping with perspiration, slackened guys and swung the derrick-boom while canoes crept into the light of the cargo-lamp and vanished, loaded, into the dark. The stir lasted for some time, and then, after the cases had all been hoisted over the side, the white men among the shore party shook hands with their hosts.

"It is all right," said the spokesman. "We are ready for the next lot when you get back."

"I suppose your man will be here in the morning to take us out?" Grahame asked, because he had been told that it was too late to leave the creek that tide.

"If nothing is happen, he certainly come."

The visitors got on board their canoe, and it slid off into the mist. When the splash of paddles died away, an oppressive silence settled down on the vessel, and the darkness seemed very thick, for the big cargo-lamp had been put out. After the keen activity a reaction had set in: the men were tired and felt the heat.

"It's lonesome," Macallister remarked, and sniffed disgustedly. "Like a hothouse in a botanic garden when they've full steam on, with a dash o' Glasgow sewer thrown in. In fact, ye might call the atmosphere a wee bit high."

"I don't suppose you found it very fresh in West Africa," Walthew replied.

"I did not. That's maybe the reason the ague grips me noo and then. Ye'll learn something about handling engines when it takes me bad. This is a verra insidious smell."

"The mosquitos are worse," Grahame said. "I won-

der whether there are many of them about? Anyway, I'd like a warp taken out and made fast to the trees. There's not much room to swing, and though the flood generally runs harder than the ebb in these places, one can't count on that."

Walthew got into the boat with Miguel and one of the crew, and came back half an hour later, smeared with mire and wet to the waist.

"We've made the rope fast, but this creek has no beach," he said. "The trees grow out of the water, and you slip off their roots into holes filled with slime. Couldn't feel any bottom in one or two, and I was mighty glad I caught a branch. In fact, we've had a rather harrowing experience."

"Get your wet clothes off and take some quinine before you go to sleep," Grahame advised; and when Walthew left him he watched the men heave the warp tight.

Soon afterward the crew went below, except for one who kept anchor-watch. The ebb tide was running strong, and Grahame was not quite satisfied about the way the vessel was moored. It was, however, impossible to make her more secure in the dark, and, getting sleepy presently, he left his seat on the stern grating and went to his berth.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRAITOR

GRAHAME was awakened by a crash. Springing half asleep from his berth, he scrambled out on deck. Thick darkness enveloped the steamer and at first he could see nothing. Then as his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, he made out indistinct black trees in the mist. They were sliding past and he knew the warp had broken and the *Enchantress* would swing inshore before her cable brought her up. This must be prevented, if possible, for the creek was narrow and shoal.

Jumping on the stern grating he gave his orders, and they were obeyed. He saw Macallister, in pajamas, dive into the engine-room, and the screw began to throb; then barefooted men sprang into the boat alongside, and a heavy rope ran out across the rail. There was nothing more to be done for a few moments and, lashing the wheel, Grahame hurriedly lighted a pyrotechnic flare. The strong blue radiance drove back the gloom, and the water glittered among cakes of floating scum. Then the bright beam picked out the boat, with Walthew toiling, half-naked, at an oar, and Miguel's tall figure bending to and fro as he sculled astern. Another man was rowing forward, and his tense pose told of determined effort, but he vanished as the light moved on.

The rope the crew were taking out fixed Grahame's attention. It crawled through the water in heavy coils, like a snake, holding the boat back while the stream swept her sideways. He did not think she could reach the opposite bank, though the *Enchantress* was sheering that way to help her. Then the light forced up a patch of greasy mud in which crawling things wriggled, and, passing on, picked out foul, dark caves among the mangrove roots. After that, it touched the rows of slender trunks and was lost in impenetrable gloom.

A few moments later the flare, burning low, scorched Grahame's fingers and he flung it over the rail. It fell with a hiss into the creek and bewildering darkness shut down. There was now no guide but the strain on the helm, and Grahame began to be afraid of breaking out the anchor. For a time the splash of oars continued, telling of the tense struggle that went on in the gloom, but it stopped suddenly and he knew the men were beaten. Ringing off the engines, he ran forward with a deckhand to drop the kedge anchor. It was heavy, an arm was foul of something, and they could not drag it clear, until a dim object appeared close by.

"Heave!" cried a breathless voice. "Handy, noo! Away she goes!"

There was a splash and a rattle as the chain ran out, a thud as the returning boat came alongside, and then the vessel quivered, listed down on one side, and became motionless.

"I'm thinking she's hard and fast, but we'll try to shake her off," Macallister said and vanished, and soon the engines began to turn.

The *Enchantress* trembled, straining hard and rattling, but when somebody lighted the cargo-lamp, which still hung from a boom, it could not be seen that she moved. The light showed a narrow stretch of water, sliding past, blotched with foul brown foam. Then it fell upon the boat's crew, who had come on board, and Grahame saw that Walthew was gasping for breath. His flushed face was wet and drawn with effort, and his bare arms and neck were marked by small red spots.

"Sorry we couldn't manage to reach the bank," he panted. "Warp kept getting across her and the stream was running fast. But I'd better help Mack."

"Sit still a minute," Grahame said. "What are those marks on your neck?"

"Mosquito bites, I guess. Hadn't time to swat the brutes; they were pretty fierce."

The deck was now slanting steeply, and Grahame, looking over the rail, saw a wet strip a foot broad between the dry planks and the water.

"You can tell Mack to shut off steam," he said. "She's here until next tide and I'm not certain we can float her then."

The engines stopped, there was by contrast a curious stillness, and the men went below; but Grahame spent some time studying a chart of the coast and a nautical almanac before he went to sleep.

When the cases had been safely landed, the little group of Spaniards and half-breeds separated, some following the coastline going south, others finding a narrow path that led through the jungle beyond the mangrove-trees. Bio, the peon pilot, lingered behind.

There was no moon, but the night was not really dark, for the sky was jeweled with stars which covered the earth with a soft, mystic radiance.

When the footsteps of the others had died away and the night was quiet, Bio started slowly down the jungle path. It opened out into a flat stretch of sandy land and then was lost in a plantation of coffee-trees. Beyond the coffee plantation was an uncultivated space known to the natives as *La colina del sol* (The Hill of the Sun) because of the many broad rocks upon which the sun beat down in all its intensity. Here and there a wild date-palm grew, and an occasional clump of bananas; but except for that the hill was covered with low shrubbery and a blanket of trailing vines, which now were wet with the dew.

Bio went directly to one of the rocks and stood upon it looking upward at the stars. The warmth that still remained in the rock was pleasant to his damp, bare feet. The air about him was filled with the soft flutter of moths and other honey-seekers; the heavy perfume of a white jasmine came to him, mingled with the sweet odor of the night-blooming cereus. At his side an insect chirped, and above him a whistling frog gave answer.

These wild night sounds found quick response in Bio's Indian blood. With an odd little smile of content, he stretched out on the rock to listen—and to sleep. At high tide he would have to return to take the boat out of Mangrove Creek; what better place to wait than *La colina del sol?*

He awakened shortly after daybreak, very hungry; but he knew where he could get a pleasant breakfast before returning to the boat. With a comfortable

yawn and stretch, he left the rock and pattered off down the hill to a path that led to the main road. A half mile down this stood a little adobe house owned by a Spaniard who was suspected of sympathizing with the revolutionists although he had many friends among the *rurales.*

When Bio reached the house he gave his customary signal—a stick drawn harshly across the iron gratings at the window; and the door was soon opened by Filodomo himself. A hasty conversation followed, and Bio went back to the kitchen while Filodomo aroused his daughter. And when the black-eyed Rosita came tripping out, with the flush of sleep still on her, Bio all but forgot the *yanqui* señores and their boat which waited in Mangrove Creek.

He was enjoying his breakfast so much, indeed, that he did not hear Filodomo talking loudly in the front room. Rosita was more alert. She paused a moment to listen, and then the laughter in her eyes changed to quick alarm.

"Los rurales!" she whispered.

Bio was on his feet instantly. The *rurales* had several counts against him, and he knew what his life would be worth if he were caught. Rosita, too, seemed to know. She led him quickly to the low window and pointed to a narrow path that led through a field of cane. Bio lost no time. As he disappeared among the green stalks, the girl gave a sigh of relief; and then hurried into the front room to put the *rurales* off his path.

Bio made his way quickly but cautiously through the cane-field, meaning to double back to *La colina del sol;* but as he left the cane and rounded a gigantic

calabash-tree he ran directly into the arms of two young *rurales.*

"Not so fast, my friend," said one of them, grabbing him.

"Bio!" exclaimed the other.

And Bio knew there was no hope of escape. The *rurales* were only too eager for the credit of capturing him and taking him to headquarters.

Four days later he found himself in a military camp and was led at once to the officer in charge. During all the questions of the *rurales* he had maintained a sullen silence; but now he was forced to speak.

"We are told that the revolutionists are getting rifles from a little boat that lands them at impossible places," the officer said. "Only a pilot with your knowledge of the coast could bring in such a boat. Tell us what you know!"

Bio did not answer.

The officer leaned forward threateningly.

"We have enough charges against you to warrant our shooting you on the spot," he said. "You will never see another sunrise, unless you tell us—and tell us quickly, and truthfully!"

A gleam of hope crept into Bio's eyes.

"And if I tell you—all?"

"Then, if I believe you, you will be set at liberty."

There was a sneer in the conditional clause that made Bio's blood run cold for an instant; but it seemed his only chance of escape, and he began haltingly but in a tone that they could not doubt was the truth.

"I left the boat far up in Mangrove Creek," he ended. "I think the *yanqui* señores cannot take her out."

"Tell Morales to have the mules ready at once!" the officer ordered. "The quickest road?" he asked Bio.

The pilot answered without faltering. The road he told them was twice as far as over *La colina del sol* and through the jungle path.

The officer consulted a few moments with the *rurales* who had brought Bio in, and then gave his decision.

"My men will not need you. You will be held in camp for one day and then set at liberty. I am a man of my word!"

Bio could hardly believe his good luck, although he frowned anxiously at that one day's detention. Silently he followed his guards; but, as he expected, he found them very lax after the first hour or two. Long before midnight he was snaking his way noiselessly through the underbrush that surrounded the camp.

And in the meantime the *rurales* were riding furiously along the road that led to Mangrove Creek.

CHAPTER IX

STRANDED

THE sun was high above the mangroves when Walthew joined Grahame and Macallister at breakfast the morning after they landed the rifles. No wind entered the gap in the forest, the smoke went straight up from the slanted funnel, and the air was still and sour. The steamer lay nearly dry among banks of mire, though a narrow strip of dazzling water sluggishly flowed inland past her. Fifty yards outshore, there was a broader channel and beyond it the dingy, pale-stemmed mangroves rose like a wall. Some were strangely spotted, and Walthew glanced at them with disgust as he drank his coffee.

"I guess I've never seen such repulsive trees," he said. "This place takes away one's appetite. Even the coffee's bitter; you've been doctoring it."

"It's weel to take precautions," Macallister replied. "Ye got a few nibbles last night from a dangerous bit beastie they ca' *anopheles*."

"I suppose it doesn't manufacture the malaria germ, and from the looks of the place one wouldn't imagine there was anybody else about for it to bite."

"That's what we're hoping. We're no' anxious for visitors, but when ye meet a smell like what we noo

enjoy, ye take quinine till it makes ye hear church bells ringing in your head."

Walthew turned to Grahame.

"Can you get her off?"

"We'll try. The sooner we get out the better; but the tides are falling."

"Do you reckon the half-breed pilot meant to pile her up?"

"No," said Grahame thoughtfully. "For one thing, it would be a dangerous game, because his employers wouldn't hesitate about knifing him. They gave us a check which I've reason to believe will be honored and they wouldn't have wasted their money if they'd meant treachery. I imagine they're all too deep in the plot to turn informer."

"Do you think the pilot will turn up to take us out then?"

"I believe he'll be here at high-water, unless he's prevented."

"What could prevent him?"

"It's possible that our friends have been followed by the opposition's spies. The man who rules this country is not a fool."

"Then it seems to me we must do our best to heave the boat off this tide."

"Mack and I agree with you," Grahame said meaningly.

Breakfast was soon finished, for nobody had much appetite, and they sat, smoking, in the thin shade while the water got deeper in the creek. When the *Enchantress* slowly rose upright, Macallister went down to stir the fires; but though the others listened anxiously no splash of paddles broke the silence.

"Our pilot's not coming," Grahame said at last. "I'll try to take her out if we can get her afloat."

"What's likely to happen to him if he's been corralled by the dictator's rural-guards?"

"On the whole," said Grahame, "I'd rather not speculate. They have a drastic way of dealing with rebels here."

An hour later the screw shook the vessel, while the windlass strained at the cable. Once or twice a few links of chain ran in and she moved, but the mud had a firm hold and she stuck fast again. Then the water began to fall and Grahame reluctantly told Macallister to draw the fires.

"We're here for the next six days," he said.

"It's to be hoped the Government's spies don't find us out before we get her off," Walthew remarked.

"We could put the coal and heavier stores ashore, if ye can find a bit dry beach to land them on," Macallister suggested. "It would lighten her."

"I thought of that," Grahame answered. "On the other hand, it might be safer to keep them on board as long as possible. We could strip her and land everything in a day."

Macallister agreed, and for four days they lounged in such shade as they could find. It was fiercely hot, not a breath of wind touched the dazzling creek, and the sun burned through the awning. The pitch bubbled up from the deck-seams, the water in the tanks was warm, and innumerable flies came off from the mangroves and bit the panting men. To make things worse, there was no coolness after sunset, when steamy mist wrapped the vessel in its folds, bloodthirsty mosquitos came down in swarms, buzzing insects dimmed

the lamps, and the smell of festering mire grew nauseating. Sleep was out of the question, and when the mosquitos drove them off the deck the men lay in their stifling berths and waited drearily for another day of misery to begin.

Among other discomforts, Walthew, who was not seasoned to the climate, was troubled by a bad headache and pains in his limbs, but he said nothing about this and accompanied Grahame when the latter took the soundings in the dinghy. At last they rose at daybreak one morning to lighten the vessel, and although he felt shaky and suffered from a burning thirst, Walthew took charge of the gig, which was to be used for landing coal.

The work was hard, for when they reached a sand bar up the creek they were forced to wade some distance through mud and shallow water with the heavy bags on their backs, while the perspiration soaked their thin clothes and the black dust worked through to their skin. At noon they stopped for half an hour and Walthew lay in the stern-sheets of the gig where there was a patch of shade. He could not eat, and after drinking some tea tried to smoke, but the tobacco tasted rank and he put his pipe away. Up to the present his life had been luxurious. He had been indulged and waited on, and had exerted himself only in outdoor sports. Now he felt very sick and worn out, but knew that he must make good. Having declined to enter his father's business, he must prove his capacity for the career he had chosen. Moreover, he suspected that Macallister and Grahame were watching him.

When the clatter of the winch began again he hid the effort it cost him to resume his task and stubbornly

pulled his oar as the gig floated up the creek with her gunwale near awash. His back hurt him almost unbearably when he lifted a heavy bag, and it was hard to keep upon his feet while he floundered through the mire. Sometimes his head reeled and he could scarcely see. The blisters on his hands had worked into bleeding sores. This, however, did not matter much by comparison with the pain in his head.

After the coal was landed they loaded loose ironwork and towed heavy spars ashore, and Walthew held out somehow until darkness fell, when he paddled back to the *Enchantress* with a swarm of mosquitos buzzing round his face.

He could not eat when they sat down to a frugal meal, and afterward lay in his berth unable to sleep, and yet not quite awake, lost in confused thoughts that broke off and left him conscious of intolerable heat and pain. When he went languidly on deck the next morning Grahame looked hard at him.

"You had better lie down in the shade," he said.

"I may let up when we reach open water," Walthew answered with a feeble smile. "There's not much enjoyment to be got out of a lay-off here."

Grahame reluctantly agreed. He knew something about malaria and Walthew did not look fit for work; but every man was needed, and this foul swamp was no place to be ill. The sooner they got out the better.

Steam was up when the *Enchantress* rose with the tide, and shortly afterward the engines began to throb. Muddy foam leaped about the whirling screw, flame mingled with the smoke that poured from her funnel, and steam roared from the blow-off pipe. Then the clatter of winch and windlass joined in, and Grahame

stood, tense and anxious, holding a rope that slipped round the spinning drum. The winch could not shorten it, though the vessel was shaking and working in her muddy bed. It was high-water, the tide would soon begin to fall, and the sweat of suspense and strain dripped from the man as, at the risk of breaking the warp, he tightened the turns on the drum. It gripped; to his surprise, a little slack came off, and he nodded to Walthew, who was watching him eagerly from the windlass.

"Give her all, if you burst the chain!" he cried.

The windlass clanked for a few moments, stopped, and clanked again; the *Enchantress* trembled and crept a foot or two ahead. Then she stuck while the cable rose from the water, rigid as a bar, and the messenger-chain that drove the windlass creaked and strained at breaking tension. While Grahame expected to see links and gear-wheels fly, there was a long shiver through the vessel's frame, a mad rattle of liberated machinery, and she leaped ahead.

Five minutes later Walthew walked shakily aft, scarcely seeing where he went because a confused sense of triumph had brought a mist into his dazzled eyes. This was the first big thing in which he had taken a leading part. He had made good and played the man; but there was still much to be done and he pulled himself together as he stopped near Grahame.

"She's moored where she won't ground again, but perhaps you had better see that the chain-compressors and warp fastenings are right."

"If you're satisfied, it's enough," said Grahame.

"Then I'll take the gig and get the coal on board."

"If you feel equal to it," Grahame answered.

Walthew got into the boat with a sense of elation. His eyes had met Grahame's while they spoke, and a pledge of mutual respect and trust had passed between them. But this was not quite all. He felt he had won official recognition from a leader he admired; he was no longer on trial but accepted as a comrade and equal. The thought sustained him through a day of murderous toil, during which his worn-out muscles needed constant spurring by the unconquered mind. It was not dainty and, in a sense, not heroic work in which he was engaged, but it must be done, and he dimly saw that human nature rose highest in a grapple with obstacles that seemed too great to overcome. Whatever the odds against him were, he must not be beaten.

The heat was pitiless in the afternoon, but Walthew pulled his oar and carried the hundred-pound coal bags across a stretch of mire that grew broader as the tide ebbed. He could scarcely pull his feet out and keep the load upon his aching back, and he sometimes sank knee-deep in the softer spots. The air was heavy with exhalations from the swamps; he had thrown off his jacket and the coal wore holes in his shirt and rubbed raw places on his skin. He was wet from the waist downward and black above, while the gritty dust filled his eyes and nostrils. Still he held out until the work was finished, when the *Enchantress's* cargo-light began to twinkle through the dusk; and then, losing his balance, he fell forward into the boat with his last heavy load. Miguel pushed her off, and with oars splashing slackly she moved downstream. When she ran alongside the steamer, Grahame saw a limp, black figure lying huddled on the floorings. The others

lifted it gently, but Walthew did not speak when he was laid on deck, and Macallister, bending over him, looked up at Grahame.

"Fever and exhaustion! I allow that ye were right about the lad. But we must do the best we can for him."

They washed off the coal-dust, and when Walthew, wrapped in thick blankets, lay unconscious in his berth, they debated earnestly over the medicine chest before administering a dose that experience in the unhealthy swamps of the tropics alone justified. They forced it, drop by drop, between his clenched teeth, and then Macallister waited with a grimy finger on his pulse, while Grahame sat down limply on the edge of the berth. His hands were bruised, his thin clothes were torn, and he felt the reaction after the day's strain. He had now an hour or two in which to rest, and then he must pull himself together to take the vessel down the creek.

When at last Macallister nodded, as if satisfied, Grahame went wearily up on deck. Except for a faint hiss of steam, everything was quiet. Tired men lay motionless about the deck, and the mist that clung to the mangroves did not stir. After a while the lap of the flood-tide against the planks made itself heard, and the moon, which was getting large, rose above the trees.

Grahame, sitting limply on the grating, half dozing while he waited, suddenly jumped to his feet, startled. Out of the semi-darkness came distinctly the splash of oars, faint at first and then nearer.

Miguel lay nearest him. The Spaniard, quickly

grasping the danger, shook his men awake while Grahame ran below to Macallister.

"The government spies!" he said briefly. "Our pilot's turned traitor!"

CHAPTER X

THE PEON PILOT

GRAHAME and Macallister stood on deck, peering into the moonlit jungle of mangroves. So far as they could judge, there was only one pair of oars making the splashes that had aroused them; but they could hear the blades dig deep into the water with an intense effort that could mean only haste on the part of the boatsman.

They waited; and presently the small boat appeared in the moonlight and they saw a single figure, who dropped one oar and crossed himself religiously.

"*Gracias a Dios!*" he said.

"The pilot!" Macallister gasped.

Grahame waited, tense and alert, until the pilot climbed on board. The instant the half-breed touched the deck he began gesticulating wildly and talking so rapidly that Grahame had difficulty in grasping his meaning. Miguel, who was more at home in the peon Spanish, explained—in English, for Macallister's sake.

"The government men catch him; make him tell; he escape; take short path—Indian *senda;* get here first. *Soldados* coming. We hurry!"

Miguel had worked himself up to a state of great excitement, and when he finished, his bare feet went pattering off across the deck almost before Grahame could give the order.

Tired as the men were, they realized the necessity for haste, and they lost no time in getting under way. There was a clatter in the stokehold as the fires were cleaned, the dinghy crept across the creek, and half-seen men forward hurriedly coiled in a wet rope. Then the boat came back and the windlass rattled while the propeller floundered slowly round. The anchor rose to the bows and the *Enchantress* moved away against the flood tide.

The pilot took the wheel while Grahame stood beside him. There were broad, light patches where the water dazzled Grahame's eyes, and then belts of gloom in which the mangroves faded to a formless blur. Still, they did not touch bottom; miry points round which the tide swirled, rotting logs on mud-banks, and misty trees crept astern, and at last they heard the rumble of the swell on beaten sand.

She glided on, lifting now and then with a louder gurgle about her planks. When a white beach gleamed in the moonlight where the trees broke off, the *Enchantress* stopped to land the faithful pilot, who had first betrayed and then saved them.

"It was a risky thing he did," Grahame said, as the half-breed, standing easily in his boat, swaying with the rhythm of his oars, rowed off into the moonlight. "Suppose they had caught him coming to us—or with us!"

"I'm thinking yon pilot's a bit of a hero," Macallister responded laconically. "Albeit a coward first!"

"Oh, it was all for Don Martin's sake that he risked his own hide to warn us. Don Martin has a wonderful hold on those peons. They'd go through fire and water for him."

The *Enchantress* skirted a point where two sentinel cedar-trees stood out blackly against the sky; then the spray leaped about the bows as she dipped to the swell, and the throb of engines quickened as she left the shore behind.

Two weeks later the *Enchantress* was steaming across a sea that was flecked with purple shadow and lighted by incandescent foam. Macallister lounged in the engine-room doorway, Grahame sat smoking on a coil of rope, and Walthew, wrapped in a dirty blanket, lay under the awning. His face was hollow, his hair damp and lank, and his hands, with which he was clumsily rolling a cigarette, were very thin. The deck was piled with a load of dyewood, which they had bought rather with the object of accounting for their cruise than for the profit that might be made on it.

"It's good to feel alive on a day like this, but I suspect it was doubtful for a time whether I'd have that satisfaction," Walthew remarked languidly. "Guess I owe you both a good deal."

They had stubbornly fought the fever that was wasting him away, and had felt that they must be beaten, but Macallister grinned.

"I'll no' deny that ye were an interesting case and gave us a chance o' making two or three experiments. As ye seem none the worse for them, ye must be tougher than ye look."

"I thought tampering with other people's watches was your specialty."

"What's a watch compared with the human body?" Macallister asked.

"You do know something about springs and wheels,

but it's different with drugs. I expect you gave way to an unholy curiosity to see how they would work."

"Maybe there's something in the notion. An engineer canna help wanting to find out how things act. It's a matter o' temperament, and there's no' a great difference between watching the effect o' a new oil on your piston-rings and seeing what happens when a patient swallows your prescription. I'll say this for ye: ye were docile."

"I've survived," said Walthew. "From my point of view, that's the most important thing."

"And now you had better think about the future," Grahame interposed. "Some people are practically immune from malaria; others get it moderately now and then, and some it breaks down for good. At first it's difficult to tell which class one belongs to, but you have had a sharp attack. There's some risk of your spending the rest of your life as an ague-stricken invalid if you stick to us."

"How heavy is the risk?"

"Nobody can tell you that, but it's to be reckoned with. I understand that your father would take you back?"

"He'd be glad to do so, on his terms," said Walthew thoughtfully. "Still, it's hard to admit that you're beaten, and I suspect the old man would have a feeling that I might have made a better show. He wants me to give in and yet he'd be sorry if I did."

"Suppose you go home in twelve months with a profit on the money he gave you?" Grahame suggested.

"Then I'm inclined to think he'd welcome me on any terms I cared to make."

"Think it over well and leave us out of the question," Grahame said.

"You can't be left out," Walthew answered with a gleam in his eyes. "But I'll wait until I feel better. I may see my way then."

They left him and he lighted his cigarette, though the tobacco did not taste good. Hardship and toil had not daunted him, the risk of shipwreck and capture had given the game a zest, but the foul mangrove quagmires, where the fever lurks in the tainted air, had brought him a shrinking dread. One could take one's chance of being suddenly cut off, but to go home with permanently broken health or perhaps, as sometimes happened, with a disordered brain, was a different thing. Since he took malaria badly, the matter demanded careful thought. In the meanwhile, it was enough to lie in the shade and feel his strength come back.

A few days later they reached Havana, where they sold the dyewood and had arranged to meet Don Martin Sarmiento, whose affairs occasionally necessitated a visit to Cuba.

One evening soon after his arrival, Grahame stood in the *patio* of the Hotel International. The International had been built by some long-forgotten Spanish *hidalgo,* and still bore traces of ancient art. The basin in the courtyard with the stone lions guarding its empty fountain was Moorish, the balconies round the house had beautiful bronze balustrades cast three hundred years ago, and the pillars supporting them were delicately light.

The building had, however, been modernized, for

part of the *patio* was roofed with glass, and wide steps, tiled in harsh colors, led to a lounge through which one entered the dining-room, where everything was arranged on the latest American plan. There was a glaring café in the front of the building, and an archway at the back led to the uncovered end of the *patio*, where porters, pedlers, and the like importuned the guests.

Just then this space was occupied by a group of Chinamen, half-breeds, and negroes, and Grahame was watching them carelessly when he heard a step behind him. Turning abruptly, he stood facing Evelyn Cliffe. He imagined that she looked disturbed, but she frankly gave him her hand.

"You!" she exclaimed. "This is something of a surprise."

"That's what I felt," he answered. "I hope the pleasure's also mutual. But you see, I get my meals here and Walthew has a room. He has been down with fever and isn't quite better yet."

"And I've just arrived with my father, who has some business in the town," Evelyn said and laughed. "I nearly missed meeting you, because I thought you were a stranger and I meant to slip past, but you were too quick. Do you generally swing round in that alert manner when you hear somebody behind you?"

"I admit it's a habit of mine—though I must have been clumsy if you noticed it. A number of people go barefooted in these countries, and the business I'm engaged in demands some caution."

"Then it's lucky you have self-control, because you might run a risk of injuring a harmless friend by mistake."

"One does not mistake one's friends. They're not too plentiful," he replied, smiling.

"But what is the business that makes you so careful?"

"I think I could best call myself a general adventurer, but at present I'm engaged in trade. In fact, I'm living rather extravagantly after selling a cargo."

Evelyn gave him a quick glance. His manner was humorous, but she imagined he wished to remind her that he did not belong to her world. This jarred, because there was an imperious strain in her, and she felt that she could choose her acquaintances as she liked. Besides, it was mocking her intelligence to suggest that the man was not her equal by birth and education. For all that, she had been disconcerted to find him in the hotel. He had exerted a disturbing influence when they first met, and she had had some trouble in getting free from it. That the influence was unintentional made things no better, because Evelyn did not want her thoughts to center on a man who made no attempt to please her. Yet she felt a strange pleasure in his society.

"I suppose you are waiting for dinner now?" she said.

"Yes," he answered. "Shall we look for a seat here? A fellow who sings rather well sometimes comes in."

He led her to a bench near the marble basin under the broad leaves of a palm. Evelyn noticed that the spot was sufficiently public to offer no hint of privacy, and she admired his tact. It got dark while they engaged in casual talk, and colored servants lighted lamps among the plants and flowers. Then the soft tinkle of a

guitar and a clear voice, trilling on the higher notes with the Spanish tremolo, came out of the shadow. One or two others joined in, and Evelyn listened with enjoyment.

"The *Campanadas,*" Grahame said. "It's a favorite of mine. The refrain states that grapes eaten in pleasant company taste like honey."

"Isn't that a free translation? I'm not a Spanish scholar, but I imagine it means something more personal than company in general."

"Yes," said Grahame slowly. "It really means—with you."

The music changed to a plaintive strain, which had something seductive and passionate in its melancholy.

"Las aves marinas," said Evelyn. "That means the sea-birds, doesn't it? What is the rest?"

"I won't paraphrase this time. The song declares that although the sea-birds fly far across the waves they cannot escape the pains of love. These people are a sentimental lot, but the idea's poetical."

"I wonder whether it's true," Evelyn said with a smile. "Perhaps you ought to know."

"The sea-birds are fierce wild things that live by prey. One associates them with elemental strife—the white tide-surge across desolate sands and the pounding of the combers on weedy reefs—and not with domestic peace. That's the lot of the tame land-birds that haunt the sheltered copse."

"And cannot one have sympathy with these?"

"Oh, yes. I've often stopped to listen while a speckled thrush sang its love-song among the bare ash-boughs in our rain-swept North. The joyful trilling goes straight to one's heart."

"And lingers there?"

"Where our thrushes sing, you can, if you listen, hear the distant roar of the sea. It's a more insistent call than the other."

"But only if you listen! Cannot you close your ears?"

"That might be wiser. It depends upon your temperament."

Evelyn was silent for the next minute or two, and Grahame mused. He had felt the charm of the girl's beauty, and suspected in her a spirit akin to his. She had courage, originality, and, he thought, a longing, hitherto curbed by careful social training, to venture beyond the borders of a tame, conventional life. It was possible that he might strengthen it; but this would not be playing a straight game. For all that, he was tempted, and he smiled as he recalled that in earlier days his ancestors had stolen their brides.

"Why are you amused?" Evelyn asked.

"An idle thought came into my mind," he said awkwardly.

Evelyn smiled.

"My father has come to look for me; but I shall see you again. You will be here some time?"

"A few days."

He watched her join Cliffe in the archway that led from the *patio,* and then he sat down again on the bench under the palm-tree. But he no longer heard the strum of the guitars nor the tinkle of the mandolins: he was thinking of Evelyn. There seemed to be some peculiar bond of sympathy between them; he felt that she understood him even when nothing much was said.

"Mooning all alone?" came Walthew's voice.

Grahame laughed, and joined his comrade and Macallister, who had entered the *patio* with Don Martin and Blanca.

CHAPTER XI

A MODERN DON QUIXOTE

THE dining-room of the International Hotel was modern, but while noisy, power-driven fans stirred the heavy air and the decoration was profuse, traces of more austere ancient art remained. Stone pillars and the fretted arch at one end had an Eastern grace and lightness; among the gaudy modern lamps hung one or two finely-modeled in copper and burning scented oil. The glass and nickeled knives were American, but curious old carafes filled with red and yellow wine stood among the flowers and fruit on the long table.

Evelyn, looking down the room from its opposite end, was conscious of faint displeasure when Grahame entered with a very attractive girl. The feeling could not be jealousy, but she studied Blanca with a curiosity that was half hostile. The girl was dressed in Parisian fashion, but she walked with a grace that only Spanish women show. There was no fault to be found with her supple figure, but her black hair was rather coarse and her blue eyes too languishing. Yet she was well bred, and the man in dark clothes who followed and was, no doubt, her father had an air of dignity. Grahame seemed to be on friendly terms with them, for they talked and laughed when they sat

down and Evelyn noticed that the girl sometimes touched him coquettishly with her fan.

Walthew sat opposite with a thoughtful expression; and soon Macallister joined in the talk. It was obvious that he was amusing, for Evelyn saw those who sat near smile and then hearty laughter rose from his end of the table. The Spanish girl and Grahame no longer spoke to each other, and the engineer's voice came up through the clink of glass and the hum of conversation, sometimes in broad Scots and sometimes in stumbling and uncouth Castilian.

When the guests were leaving the dining-room Grahame met Cliffe in the corridor.

"Glad to see you. I didn't expect to find you in Havana," the American said cordially. "I want a smoke. Will you come along?"

They found a seat in the *patio,* and Cliffe gave Grahame a cigar.

"How's business?" he asked.

"We can't complain, so far," Grahame answered cautiously. "The boat, of course, does not carry much, but her light draught allows her to get into harbors that larger vessels can only enter on big tides, and we sold our last cargo at a satisfactory price. Just now I'm looking out for a few passengers to Kingston; there's no boat across for some time."

"I might go with you, if you have two good rooms to spare. There's a fruit-growing estate I want to look at in Jamaica."

The suggestion was welcome to Grahame. He promised to give Cliffe part of the deckhouse, and they afterward talked of something else.

In the meanwhile, Walthew was sitting with Blanca

Sarmiento. He was quiet, for he still felt languid and the *patio* was hot; but he was conscious of his companion's charm. Indeed, he had thought of her often since he left Rio Frio, and she had had a place in the fantastic dreams the fever brought him.

"You do not speak much, but you have been ill," she said presently, with a sympathetic glance. "It was a grief to us to hear it; but you have suffered in a good cause."

"I'm not sure of that," Walthew answered. "You see I was out for money."

"And that was all!" Blanca exclaimed in a half-contemptuous tone.

"I think so," Walthew admitted. "My people are traders and I suppose money-making runs in the family. Still, I might claim to be a soldier of fortune, if you like that better. It's more romantic, anyhow."

"Ah!" she said with a sparkle in her eyes. "There were great soldiers of fortune among the liberators; one thinks of Bolivar, Lafayette, and Garibaldi. But the brave Italian had wounds and prison, not money, for his reward."

"These fellows are too near the top notch for me to follow. I know my limits," Walthew modestly owned.

"One should follow the highest, and chivalry is not dead; even commerce cannot kill it. There are still knights errant, who see visions and leave everything, to right the wrong and help the downtrodden. It has been my good fortune to meet one or two."

"Your Cervantes wrote about one such. Seems to me that although he meant well, Don Quixote did more harm than good."

"Ah, the sad, sad book! But you think like Cervantes? You sneer at romance?"

"I'm young, señorita, but I try to keep my head." He gave her a steady glance. "Sometimes I find it difficult."

She laughed with a sparkle of coquetry, and touched him with her fan.

"Then there is hope for you, and we will labor for your conversion. The man who always keeps his head never does anything great; the power that moves the world comes from the heart." Lowering her voice, she went on: "Our cause is just, señor, but we need trustworthy friends, even if they are not idealists. Quixote failed because he used rusty armor and the lance; we will use rifles."

Walthew was trying to be cautious, but was swept away. He had been attracted by the girl at their first meeting, though he had then felt something of the Anglo-Saxon's prejudice against the southern races, which is not unmarked in the United States. This had gone, however, and he now wondered whether Blanca meant to use him only to further her father's objects, or if she had any personal interest in him. Her patriotism was, he thought, a burning flame, and she would not stick at trifles where she saw a chance of serving her country. Still, it would be his fault if she were willing to get rid of him when he had done his work.

"I wonder why you thought I could be trusted?" he said.

"It is difficult to explain, señor, but one can tell, perhaps by instinct, when a man rings true."

"It would hurt to find you had been deceived?"

"It might be so," she answered slowly.

Walthew wondered if this were mere flirtation, designed to gain an end. Blanca was playing with her fan, which lay in her lap. He could not see her eyes. He felt that he had been given an opportunity, however, and he meant to seize it. Leaning forward toward her, he waited until she raised her eyes to his, and then he spoke in a low, tense voice.

"When I was leaving Rio Frio, I found a crimson rose on the pavement. I picked it up because I ventured to think it was meant for me."

Blanca was again playing with her fan, opening and shutting it slowly.

"Señor, it is possible the flower was dropped by mistake," she said, giving him a sidewise glance that made his heart beat fast.

"How—if it was really meant for me?"

She hesitated a moment, and then, raising her head, she met his insistent look with a curious smile.

"It was given because I thought you were perhaps, in a way, and as far as it was possible for you, like the great soldiers of fortune we talked about."

Walthew made her a ceremonious bow.

"You set me a pretty big task, señorita, but, as far as it's possible for me, I will try to make good."

He was thrilled by the look she gave him as she rose and held out her hand.

"Your conversion begins," she said, with a strange, new note in her voice. "It is a chivalrous resolve, and —you will live up to it, señor."

When she left him, Walthew found Grahame alone in the hotel lounge.

"I promised to let you know whether the malaria

would send me home or not," he said. "I've made up my mind to see the business through."

Grahame grasped his hand cordially.

"I don't know that you are wise, old man; but I am glad to have you, just the same." He gave Walthew a whimsical look. "Haven't you come to a decision rather suddenly?"

"That doesn't matter," said Walthew, "I mean to stick to it."

CHAPTER XII

BAITING THE SMUGGLERS

IT was late, and the dew was heavy. Macallister's thin clothes were getting damp as he walked impatiently up and down the mole. The *Enchantress's* gig lay near the steps, but her crew had not arrived, although Macallister had waited half an hour for them. This by no means pleased him, because, while not a tyrant, he expected his orders to be obeyed. Besides, he resented the ingratitude of the men. He had agreed with Grahame that it was prudent to moor the *Enchantress* out in the harbor and keep the crew short of money. They had behaved well, and during the afternoon Macallister had given them a few pesetas and allowed them a run ashore, although he imagined he had kept within a limit that would ensure their sobriety.

They had, however, not returned, and he felt disturbed as he watched the twinkling anchor-lights and the ripples flash in the silvery track the moon cast across the water. Boats were coming and going, and when one approached the landing Macallister drew back into the shadow. He had made the acquaintance of the captain and the engineer of the vessel from which the boat came, and he did not want to be found waiting for his unpunctual crew. The footsteps of

those who landed were growing faint when he heard singing farther up the mole. The voice was unsteady, and the patter of bare feet that accompanied it suggestively uneven.

Macallister knew the song, and was not surprised that his men, who were obviously coming back the worse for liquor, should show a taste for good music, for this is common among Spanish-Americans. It was, however, difficult to understand how they had made the money he had given them go so far.

"Where kept ye, ye drunken swine?" he asked when they lurched into sight.

"No savvy," answered his fireman, Pepe, and Macallister explained what he thought of them in the most virulent epithets used along the Clyde.

This relieved his feelings and satisfied his sense of discipline, but he did not think it wise to translate his remarks: Spanish half-breeds have fiery tempers and carry knives.

"Get into the boat before I kick ye off the mole!" he concluded when he was breathless, and the men clumsily obeyed, though one came near to falling into the water. They had some trouble in getting out the oars, but at last they rowed away. Macallister noted that one man placed a small cane basket under a thwart, and he suspected what was inside.

When they reached the *Enchantress* he was first on deck, but he waited by the gangway until the man who carried the basket climbed up. Macallister held out his hand for the basket, and when the fellow gave it to him confidingly he hurried aft to examine it by the engine lamp. It contained two bottles of *anisado,* a spirit flavored with aniseed in favor in Spanish coun-

tries. He felt tempted to throw them overboard, but refrained because such waste went against the grain, and the liquor might be doled out when the men had been forced to work unusually hard. He imagined they had forgotten the matter, and was lighting his pipe when he heard them coming, and stepped out of the engine-room to meet them.

"There was a small basket, señor," one said civilly, though his voice was thick.

"It is possible you dropped it overboard," Macallister suggested in his best Castilian—which was very bad.

"No, señor. One does not drop such baskets over."

"What was in it, then?"

The man was obviously not sober, but it looked as if he had not lost his senses.

"A small present to me and the others, Don Andres. You will give it back to us."

"No," said Macallister sternly. "Presents of that kind are not allowed on board this ship."

He watched them while they murmured together. They were active, wiry fellows, obedient as a rule, but liable to passionate outbreaks, like most of their mixed race. Now they looked drunkenly determined, and he knew the strength of his fireman, Pepe.

"The basket is ours," said one. "We will take it."

"I think not," said Macallister shortly. "Stand back!"

Their half-respectful mood changed in a flash and they came at him with a rush. They could wrestle and use the knife, and Macallister knew that Pepe, who came first, must be stopped. He supposed that Miguel, whom he had left on board, was asleep: but to sum-

mon help would be subversive of authority and the affair would be over before Miguel arrived. Lunging forward, he put the weight of his body into his blow, and Pepe reeled when it landed on his jaw. Before he could recover, Macallister sprang upon him, and with a strenuous effort flung him backward through the gangway.

There was a splash in the water and the others stopped, daunted by the vigor of the attack; but Pepe did not strike out for the gig as Macallister expected. Indeed, for there was shadow along the vessel's side, he did not seem to come up, and after a moment's pause Macallister jumped into the sea. The water closed above him, but when he rose a white-clad figure was struggling feebly near by and he seized it. Pepe seemed unable to swim, and Macallister had some trouble in dragging him to the gig, into which the others had jumped. They pulled both men out of the water, and in another few minutes Macallister stood, dripping, on board the *Enchantress,* sternly regarding his fireman. The shock had apparently sobered him, and the others, with the instability of their kind, had become suddenly docile.

"Now," said Macallister, "where did you get the *anisado?*"

"A gentleman gave it to us in a café."

Macallister shook his head.

"Try again! A gentleman does not give drunken sailors bottles of liquor."

"We were not drunk then," one of them answered naïvely. "And he was a gentleman: he spoke Castilian like the Peninsulares."

"Ah," said Macallister thoughtfully, for the use of

good Peninsular Spanish indicates a man of education. "So he gave you all some wine and put the bottles in the basket!"

"It was so, Don Andres," another answered with a readiness that invited belief.

"But why?"

"Who can tell?" Pepe rejoined. "Perhaps the señor was generous; then he said he liked sailors and tales of the sea."

"You told him some, no doubt," Macallister remarked dryly.

"We did, Don Andres. Herman told him of the great shark that bites off the fishermen's oars at Punta Anagan, and I about the ghost *caravela* that beats to windward in Jaurez Strait."

"And what else?"

Pepe shook his head.

"Then there was some cognac and afterward—I do not remember."

"Get below, except the anchor-watch!" Macallister said sternly. "We'll consider what's to be done with you to-morrow."

They slouched away, and while Macallister was talking to Miguel a splash of oars grew louder, and presently Grahame clambered up from a shore boat. He heard what had happened and then, sitting down, thoughtfully lighted his pipe.

"You must see what this points to," he remarked.

"It's no' difficult. Somebody has made the wasters drunk, and I ken what sea stories he would start them telling. A *gran señor,* they said!"

"One of President Altiera's spies! But why do you think he gave them the *anisado* afterward?"

"He might have wanted them to make trouble, so we'd put them ashore and he could get hold o' them again. Then it's possible it would have suited him if they'd knifed you or me."

"There may be something in that. Anyhow, your going overboard after Pepe ended the matter well. They're not ungrateful; it gives us a hold on them."

"I see that noo, but I did no' stop to think before I jumped," Macallister modestly admitted. "It was what ye might call a stroke o' natural genius. Then, ye see, I threw him in."

Grahame laughed.

"Well, we must keep our eyes open, and get away as soon as we can. I expect to finish with Don Martin to-morrow."

On the following evening Cliffe was sitting with Evelyn in his private room at the International when a mulatto boy brought him in a card.

"Señor Gomez!" he remarked. "The fellow has kept me hanging round three days, and I'd made up my mind to sail with Grahame to-morrow, whether he came or not."

"Who is Señor Gomez?" Evelyn asked.

"I understand his official title is *Secretario General*, and he's next in power to the President of the country I'm trying to do business with. My opinion is that they're both slippery rascals."

He broke off as the door opened and a dark-skinned gentleman came in. Gomez bowed ceremoniously to Evelyn and Cliffe, and then waited with his hat in his hand. He was dressed all in black except for his spotless linen. He wore a number of valuable rings, and

Evelyn noticed that his nails were unusually curved and long. She shrank from the glance of bold admiration he gave her, but resentment and half-instinctive dislike conquered this feeling, and she returned his greeting politely when Cliffe presented him. She thought no better of him when she withdrew after some general talk.

"Now," Cliffe said when Evelyn had left them, "we'll get down to business. I've been waiting three days for you, and am not sure the deal is worth it."

Gomez spread out his hands with a deprecatory air.

"It was impossible to come sooner; affairs of state, you understand! May I suggest that the concessions we offer you are valuable?"

"So it seems!" Cliffe rejoined bluntly. "The price you asked was high enough, and now, when we have half fixed things, you want to raise your terms."

Gomez looked pained. He was rather stout and greasy, but his dress and manners were unexceptionable.

"Señor, that is a grief to us, but the affairs of my country necessitate the change. We only ask for a little more money in advance. It is to the advantage of all parties that you agree."

"I can't see how it is to my advantage to part with money I can make a good use of," Cliffe replied.

"I must speak frankly, señor." Gomez's manner became confidential. "These concessions have already cost you something, and there are dissatisfied people who are anxious to rob the President of his power."

"I've heard that some of them are anxious to shoot him; but that's not my business."

"With your pardon, señor, we must disagree. If

the President loses office before the papers are signed, the concessions go. I imagined you understood this."

"I suppose I did understand something of the kind," Cliffe admitted. "Still, if the revolutionists prove too strong for you, I'll lose any additional money I may let you have."

Gomez smiled, a slow and rather cruel smile.

"If we can get the money there will be an end of the discontent; we know how to deal with it. And now, with apologies, I must remark that while we give you the first opportunity, there are others——"

"Ah!" said Cliffe sharply. "I'd thought this business wouldn't have much attraction for my rivals. Whom am I up against?"

Gomez gave him a letter from a German syndicate, and Cliffe examined it closely. He knew the principal, and recognized the signature.

"I see; they're bolder than I thought," he said. "If I don't come up to the line, you'll make the deal with them."

"We should be forced. The political situation demands it."

"You mean you must have the money. Well, you have got a good deal of mine already. What becomes of it if the thing falls through?"

"It was a gift," Gomez answered with an apologetic smile. "Your generosity will be gratefully remembered."

Cliffe was silent for a few minutes. He had not been tricked, because he had known that when one negotiates a transaction of that sort with a Spanish-American country, a certain amount of money must first be spent in clearing the ground, and this, going

into the pockets of venal officials, offers no direct return. Gomez and his master had, however, been smarter than Cliffe thought, for, after exacting all they could from him, they had opened negotiations with another party, and would force him to come up to his rival's bid. They could do so, because if he drew back he would lose the money he had already put in. He distrusted them, but he thought he would be safe when he secured the concessions.

"I guess I'll have to meet you," he said, "but we'll get everything fixed up now."

Half an hour afterward he lighted a fresh cigar, and put some papers into his pocket. He was not altogether satisfied, and neither was Gomez, but they had by mutual compromise arrived at a workable arrangement and each had some respect for the other's astuteness.

"How will you get across to Jamaica?" Gomez asked.

"A little boat sails in the morning."

"The very small, lead-colored steamer? The señorita may find the accommodation rude. Why not wait for a passenger boat?"

"It's fine weather, and the man who owns her is a friend of mine."

Gomez was puzzled. He was suspicious of the *Enchantress,* and had taken trouble to find out something about her. It surprised him to learn that her owner and Cliffe were friends.

"Then he is in Havana?"

"He's in this hotel. I noticed him sitting, half asleep, in the far corner of the lounge just before you came in. Do you want to see him?"

"Oh, no," Gomez said in a careless tone, for he feared he had been incautious. "I imagined you meant he was somebody you knew in America."

He made an excuse for leaving, but Cliffe, noticing his interest, was not satisfied, and went out to the landing with him. Gomez, however, did not go straight to the lounge. He was afraid of rousing Cliffe's curiosity, and men of his stamp are seldom direct in their methods. It seemed wiser to spend a while sauntering about the *patio,* where Cliffe could see him. But Grahame in the meantime came up the stairs, and Cliffe beckoned him.

"Do you know Señor Gomez?" he asked.

"No," said Grahame, immediately on his guard. "I've heard about him. Clever politician, but a bit of a rogue, I believe."

Cliffe gave him a keen glance.

"I thought he was interested in you, but I may have been mistaken. Anyway, I told him you were taking a *siesta* in a corner of the lounge."

Grahame smiled carelessly.

"Inquisitiveness becomes a habit with fellows like Gomez, and I dare say it's needful. The cafés in these ports are full of political refugees and intriguers."

Seeing Macallister in the hall below, Grahame went down to him and told him what he had learned.

"Weel," said the engineer, dryly, "after that present o' *anisado* to the men, I'm thinking it would no' be desirable that ye should meet Señor Gomez. For a' that, I would not have him disappointed, and I'll daunder along to the lounge."

"It would be almost as bad if he saw you."

Macallister chuckled.

"He'll have hard work to recognize me afterward. Come away to the hat-rack."

Grahame followed him, feeling puzzled but suspecting that his comrade had some ingenious plan. Seeing nobody about, Macallister borrowed one or two articles from the rack; but neither he nor Grahame noticed that Miss Cliffe watched the proceedings with interest from a shadowy passage.

Shortly afterward, Gomez entered the lounge and saw only one person there, but this individual's appearance surprised him. As the light was not good, he strolled toward the drowsy gentleman who lay negligently in a big chair with a newspaper dangling from his hand. He wore a soft hat, pulled down upon his forehead as if to shade his eyes, and a loose dark cloak hung over his shoulder. He looked like a Cuban and although Gomez noticed that his nails were short and broken, this might be accounted for by his having something to do with sugar-making machinery.

"Perhaps you are not using the *diario?*" Gomez said.

The man did not look up, but held out the paper with a drowsy grunt.

Gomez was too clever to make a poor excuse for starting a conversation with a man who obviously did not wish to be disturbed, and, taking the paper, he moved away. After a few minutes he put it down and strolled out of the room. When he had gone, Macallister left by another door, and, replacing the things he had borrowed, rejoined Grahame in the *patio*.

"It worked," he said, chuckling. "If Señor Gomez was on our track, he's weel off it noo. But it's fortunate we sail the morn."

"He mustn't meet Don Martin," Grahame answered thoughtfully. "I'll go to his room and warn him."

He found that Sarmiento was out, and none of the hotel servants knew where he had gone. Grahame felt disturbed by this; but there was nothing he could do.

CHAPTER XIII

THE EMERALD RING

GRAHAME went in to dinner feeling anxious. Sarmiento had not returned, but he would probably come in before the meal was over, and Gomez was sitting by Cliffe near the head of the table. Blanca sat opposite Walthew, and Grahame found a place next to Evelyn, who had not joined Cliffe because she disliked Gomez. Though his manners were polished, there was something sinister about him, a hint of craft and cruelty, and she did not approve of his association with her father.

"Have you met the gentleman yonder?" she asked Grahame.

"Señor Gomez? I know who he is, but have not spoken to him."

"That's curious, because he has been looking at you as if he were interested."

This confirmed Grahame's suspicion, and he felt uneasy. He did not want Gomez to study him, and he would not have come in to dinner only that he must warn Sarmiento. If he and his friends were to succeed in their undertaking, their connection with Don Martin must remain unknown; for it would not be difficult to catch them landing arms should their object be suspected. He wondered where Macallister

was, for the engineer could be trusted in an emergency, and presently he saw him coming in. There was no vacant place near Grahame, and Macallister sat down some distance off.

"You may have been mistaken, Miss Cliffe," Grahame suggested. "Somehow, I imagine that Gomez is not a favorite of yours."

"That's true, though I hardly know him," she answered with a smile. "One is now and then seized by a quick prejudice, and I think the reason I mentioned the man was because I wanted your opinion."

"Did you think it worth having?"

"I can't judge. Perhaps I really wanted to be agreed with. When you have no good ground for making up your mind about a thing, it's pleasant to find your conclusions confirmed."

"Well, I believe you can trust your feelings. Gomez can't be a nice man if all one hears is true. But what turned you against him—the dash of dark blood?"

"No, not altogether. I felt repelled, as one feels repelled by a snake or a toad."

Grahame made a sign of understanding. There was, he thought, something very refined in the girl's character; an instinctive fastidiousness. She walked in the light and shrank from all that lurked in the shadow. It was her inner self that had recoiled from the swarthy politician and reason had nothing to do with the matter.

"Your father seems to be on good terms with the fellow," he remarked.

"Yes; it puzzles me. However, I suppose he is forced to deal with all kinds of people——"

She paused, and Grahame changed the subject. He might have obtained some information by judicious questions, but he could not take advantage of the girl's frankness by leading her to reveal anything she knew about her father's affairs. This would taint their friendship, which he valued.

After a time, she looked at him with a twinkle of amusement.

"I watched a little comedy shortly before dinner."

"Did you?" said Grahame. "Comedies are not unusual when one knows how to look for them, but they don't catch everybody's eye."

"This one was rather obvious; I mean the transformation of a staid Scottish engineer into a Cuban sugar-planter of convivial habits."

"Mack isn't really staid. It looks as if you didn't quite understand the Scottish character. Under its surface sobriety one's apt to find a very reckless humor. I'm a Borderer, and rather proud of it, you know. But how did the beginning of the first act strike you?"

"It seized my interest. The plot was not unusual; confused identity is a favorite theme, but I noticed some histrionic cleverness. The rake of the *sombrero* and the hang of the big cloak were good. They carried a hint of mild dissipation; one recognizes artistic talent in these light touches."

Grahame laughed.

"I'm not sure it was all art; experience may have had something to do with it. Mack's not an ascetic."

"But how did the play go off?"

"It was a success, I think."

"In one act?"

"No," said Grahame thoughtfully. "I imagine it isn't played out yet, and the other acts may not be in so light a vein."

"As you didn't expect an audience, perhaps I'd better promise not to talk about your play. You may have felt some diffidence about asking that."

"Thank you," said Grahame quietly. "You're very quick."

Evelyn smiled. There was something about the man which appealed to her. Perhaps it was the mystery that seemed to shroud him and the *Enchantress*. She noticed now that he was casting furtive glances about the dining-room.

As a matter of fact, Grahame was worried about Don Martin. The flowers, plates of fruit, and tall wine carafes obstructed his view, but he could see that Sarmiento had not come in. Gomez was talking to Cliffe, but his eyes wandered about the table. For a moment they rested on Blanca, and Grahame felt angry, as if the fellow's glance were an insult to the girl. Then it was fixed observantly upon himself, and he hid his antagonism.

Dinner was a lengthy function, but the last course was served, and some of the guests were smoking and some leaving their places to speak to their friends, when Sarmiento came in. He walked toward Grahame, who was glad of the general movement, which might help him to deal with the situation. Looking round quickly, he noted that Gomez had turned to Cliffe; and then, getting up carelessly, he stood between the secretary and Don Martin. He faced Sarmiento, and the latter stopped when he saw Grahame's frown. A life of political intrigue had made him keen-witted,

and with a negligent movement he turned and went back, speaking to a waiter as he passed.

Evelyn rose and waited by her chair. Something she did not understand was going on, and the hint of intrigue excited her. She trusted Grahame, and she thought his object was good. Moreover, she guessed that it had something to do with thwarting Gomez, and she meant to help him if she had an opportunity.

The secretary suddenly pushed back his chair, and Grahame felt his heart beat. Sarmiento was not far from the door, and his back was toward his enemy, but he would have to turn at the end of the table, and that would bring his profile into view. It seemed that he recognized the danger, though Grahame did not think he had seen Gomez, for he bent down, turning his head as he tightened his sash. His face was still hidden when he reached the door, but Grahame, looking round, saw Gomez walk quickly down the room. Other people were now leaving, and Grahame joined them, hoping that he might get out before his antagonist. He was unaware that Evelyn, who guessed his intention, was close behind him.

There was more room on Gomez's side of the table, and Grahame was delayed by several ladies whom he could not push aside. He would have risked some apparent rudeness, but dared not make a disturbance. Gomez had almost reached the door when a man collided with him and barred the way, and Grahame smiled as he heard an apology in bad Castilian, for he saw that Macallister had given Sarmiento a few more seconds' start.

Evelyn had slipped round the group of women while Grahame was trying to avoid one of them, and she was

now in front of Gomez, who was hurrying along the passage. The man was close to her when she stopped and bent down with a warning cry.

"Take care, señor! I have dropped a ring."

Gomez could not get past her, and his eyes blazed with fury. His polish was superficial, and Evelyn saw something of the savagery beneath. She flinched, but plucked up her courage.

"It is a valuable ring, and will break if you tread on it," she said.

"Move then!" Gomez commanded harshly; and when she stepped back her dress uncovered the ring. Its setting was of small emeralds and diamonds, and might easily have been crushed.

Gomez picked up the ring and gave it to her with a bow. Then he hurried on; but when he reached the *patio* it was empty, and Grahame, standing at the other end of the passage, heard his ugly exclamation. The next moment Evelyn passed him, coming back, but her manner indicated that she did not wish to speak.

After a time Grahame strolled out from the front of the hotel, and looked round as he turned a corner. Nobody followed him; and, as he expected, he found Sarmiento waiting in the shadow some distance farther on.

"What was the danger?" the Spaniard asked.

"Gomez was in the dining-room."

"Ah!" said Sarmiento. "Did he recognize me?"

"I don't think so, but I can't be sure. He was suspicious. But it's hardly prudent to stand talking in the street."

They entered a shabby café, and, choosing a quiet corner, ordered wine.

"If our friend's suspicions are aroused, he'll lose no time in following them up," Sarmiento said; and Grahame noticed that although the café was almost empty he avoided the secretary's name. "A Pinillo boat sails at daybreak and passengers go on board to-night. It seems to me that I'd better embark."

"But the Pinillo liners don't call at your port!" Grahame said.

Sarmiento smiled.

"It may puzzle our friend if he watches the mole. When I have been on board I will return quietly, but not to the hotel. I know this city, where I have trustworthy acquaintances. I may be able to learn the business that has brought him here."

"But what about your daughter?"

"I do not think our friend knows her, and our name is not on the hotel book. There is a Cuban lady I can leave her with."

"One would imagine that watching the fellow might be dangerous. There are half-breed rascals in the port who wouldn't hesitate about sandbagging or stabbing you for a few dollars. But, after all, you run some risk at Rio Frio."

"I am safe there, for a time," said Sarmiento. "The opposition dare not arrest me, and the citizens would have to be satisfied if I disappeared. There would be a riot, and the Government is not ready to use force yet."

"I see," said Grahame. "It's evident that you are popular; but the leaders of movements like yours are sometimes willing to sacrifice a comrade for the good of the cause. It might not suit them to have their hand forced by a tumult."

"Such things happen. But my hold is on the people. They would not be appeased."

"May I ask how you got that hold?"

"I will tell you, señor. My family is of some importance, and at first I was not an active liberator. The peons on my father's estate were, in a sense, his subjects: ignorant, superstitious people with childish passions; but they trusted him, and it was our tradition that they should be treated well. As I grew up, however, I saw that much had not been done. They wasted effort, suffered needless pains, and died of diseases that might be stamped out. In my inexperience I resolved that I would teach them to live healthily and well."

"I dare say you found it hard."

Sarmiento smiled.

"That is very true. I was young and an enthusiast, and it hurts to be misunderstood. Even the poor I tried to benefit regarded me with suspicion; but this was not the worst. One is not supposed to be disinterested in my country; the man who works for others is a dangerous person. His aim is to gain power, and those who have it watch him with a jealous eye. Well, I found my schemes thwarted by corrupt officials, money one could do much good with must be spent in bribes, and at last I saw that before improvement was possible our government must be reformed. I am not naturally a politician, señor; I was forced to become one."

Grahame made a sign of agreement.

"I think I understand," he said.

"It was uphill work, but the peasants I had helped began to trust me, thoughtful men gave me their support, and some joined because they hated all in authority I was becoming an influence, and it was supposed

I could be bought. Petty honors were offered and an official post. When it was found that these things did not tempt me, I became a danger to the State."

"And the President tried a different plan!"

"Sometimes I feared for my liberty, and sometimes for my life. I have had to take refuge in Cuba and the United States; much of my money has been spent. But the determination to win freedom and good government spreads. We are growing strong, and soon the reckoning with our oppressors will come."

"Will things be very much better afterward?"

Sarmiento spread out his hands.

"Who can tell? One strives and hopes for the best. It is all that is possible. Some day, perhaps, comes a small instalment of what one fights for."

Grahame did not answer, and his companion sank into the melancholy that often characterized him. He was engaged in an arduous struggle, and Grahame suspected that disappointment would meet him even in hardly won victory. The man was sincere, and had sacrificed much for his country's sake; but he could not work alone, and it might happen that his helpers, tasting power, would restore the abuses he had destroyed. It looked as if he knew this, but did not let it daunt him.

After a long silence Sarmiento took out his watch.

"I think I had better go on board the Pinillo boat now," he said. "Our business is done, and it is well that you sail to-morrow. When we are ready for the next cargo, you will hear from us."

Pulling down his hat, he left the café with his cloak thrown loosely over his shoulder, but Grahame noticed that he was careful to keep his right hand free.

CHAPTER XIV

SMOOTH WATER

THERE was no wind except the draught the steamer made as she lurched across the dazzling swell. Cuba floated like a high, blue cloud over the port hand, cut off from the water by a blaze of reflected light, and the broad Yucatan Channel, glimmering like silver, stretched ahead. The deck had been holystoned and well sluiced before sunrise and was not quite dry, and there was a slight coolness in the air where Evelyn Cliffe sat under the awning.

Macallister leaned on the rail near by, wearing a white cap with a mail company's badge, and a blue jacket over his greasy duck. He had given his dress some thought since the passengers came on board. Miguel stood at the wheel, barefooted, tall, and picturesque in spotless white, with a red cap and a red sash round his waist. A few big logs of hardwood that gave out an aromatic smell were made fast amidships.

"I suppose that lumber's valuable," Evelyn remarked.

"It depends upon whether ye want to buy or sell," Macallister replied. "They telt us good logs were scarce in Cuba, but I doubt we'll find demand is slack when we come to part wi' them."

"Then the trade can't be very profitable."

"It's just changing a shilling. Sometimes ye get a ha'penny over."

Evelyn laughed.

"Which one of you looks after business matters?"

"I'm thinking it will have to be Walthew. The lad shows a natural ability."

"But he's younger than Mr. Grahame—and probably has not had as much experience."

Macallister gave her a half-amused glance.

"The skipper's no' a fool, but when he makes a bargain he's frank and quick. States the fair price and sticks to it. He will not spend time in scheming how he can screw a few more dollars out o' the other man. Yon's a gift ye must be born with."

"Do you mean Mr. Grahame rather despises money-making?"

"No' that exactly," Macallister replied in a confidential tone. "But, ye see, he's a Grahame o' Calder Ha'."

"Oh! Is that a great distinction?"

"It depends on how ye look at things. His branch o' the family is maybe no' o' much importance noo, but in the old wild days the lairds o' Calder Ha' were chiefs on the Border. They guarded the moss roads, they kept the fords, and the kings at Stirling and Westminster noo bought their goodwill with presents and noo hanged a few o' the clan."

"And Calder Hall? Is it one of the rude stone towers you see pictures of?"

Macallister smiled.

"Calder Ha's bonny. The old tower stands, with the coat o' arms above the door, but a low, gray house

with stone-ribbed windows runs back where was once the bailly wall. Below's a bit ragged orchard, the bent trees gray with fog, and then the lawn dropping to the waterside. Nae soft Southern beauty yonder; but ye feel the charm o' the cold, rugged North." He paused, and resumed with a reminiscent air: "I mind how I went to Calder Ha' when I was a young and romantic laddie fired by Scott and him who taught the wandering winds to sing; the tales o' the Ettrick shepherd were thought good reading then. After a bit plain speaking to the foreman o' a Clydeside engine shop, I was fitting spinning gear in a new woolen mill, and I left the narrow Border town on a holiday dawn.

"There was mist along the alders and a smell o' wet dust where the white road followed the waterside, but as the sun came ower the hills I took to the moor. Red it was like crimson velvet with the light upon the ling, rolling on to Cheviot-foot, with the brown grouse crying and the clear sky above. At noon I came down a bit water that tumbled in a linn, where rowans grew among the stones and the eddies were amber with the seeping from the peat. The burn got wider, the bare hills closed in; and then I came on Calder Ha' at a turning o' the glen. Black firs behind it, standing stiff like sentinels; the house with the tower in the middle on the breast o' the brae, and the lawn running doon to a pool. Then I kent why the Grahames loved it and would never sell, though many a rich man would have bought the place from them."

"Did you tell Mr. Grahame this?" Evelyn asked.

"Maybe it makes things easier that he thinks I dinna ken," said Macallister.

Evelyn agreed, for she saw that his reticence was caused by tactful sympathy. Afterward she was silent for a time. The Scot's admiration for the old Border house appealed to her. He had shown a taste and a half-poetical imagination that she had not suspected when they first met; but it was not of Macallister she was thinking. After all, it must be something to belong to a family with such traditions as clung about Calder Hall; but she must not dwell too much on this.

"Aren't we going slowly?" she asked.

"Coal's dear in the West Indies, and the slower ye go the less ye use. But if ye are tiring o' the trip, I might drive her a bit faster."

Evelyn glanced across the long undulations that were deep-blue in the hollows, and touched upon their summits with brilliant light. She liked to feel the easy lift as the *Enchantress* shouldered off the swell; the drowsy murmur at the bows and the rhythmical throb of engines were soothing. Then there was a pleasant serenity in the wide expanse. But she was honest with herself, and she knew that the beauty of the calm sea did not quite account for the absence of any wish to shorten the voyage.

"Oh," she said, "please don't burn more coal than is necessary. I'm quite content. I love the sunshine and the smooth water."

Macallister strolled away, but she saw his twinkling smile and wondered whether he was satisfied with her excuse.

Evelyn lay back in her steamer-chair, looking out over the glistening water and idly watching the white-caps far out at sea. She felt, rather than saw, Grahame approach. When she turned to him, smiling, he

was close beside her, leaning against the rail. His pose was virile, and his expression marked by the quiet alertness she had learned to know. It suggested resolution, self-reliance, and power of command. These qualities were not obtrusively indicated, but Evelyn recognized them and wondered how much he owed to his being a Grahame of Calder Hall. Hereditary influences must be reckoned on.

"This is the first chance I've had to see you alone," he said. "I want to thank you for your help at the International."

"Was it useful?"

"Very useful. Your quickness and resourcefulness were surprising."

"That's a doubtful compliment," she laughed. "To me the affair was quite exciting. To feel that you're engaged in a conspiracy gives you a pleasant thrill."

"I wonder!" Grahame remarked rather grimly. "But may I ask——"

"Oh, I can't dissect the impulses that prompted me. No doubt, the hint of intrigue was attractive—and perhaps friendship counted too."

"And you took the excellence of my intentions on trust?"

"Well, there really was no time to question you, and judge if they were good. As a matter of fact, I'm no wiser now."

"No," he said. "On the whole, I think it's better that you shouldn't know."

"It looks as if I'm more confiding than you."

Grahame, studying her face, suspected disappointed curiosity and a touch of pique.

"Your confidence is yours, to give or withhold as you think best. Mine, however, belongs to others."

"Then there are a number of people in the plot!"

Grahame laughed.

"If it's any comfort for you to know, when you came to our rescue that night in Havana you helped a man who has made many sacrifices for a good cause."

"As you're too modest to mean yourself, you must be speaking of the gentleman with the pretty daughter."

"Yes, Doña Blanca is pretty; but I prefer the Anglo-Saxon type. There's a charm in tropical languor, but one misses the bracing keenness of the North." He quoted with a smile,

"Oh, dark and true and tender——"

"We may be true; one likes to think so. But I'm not sure that tenderness is a characteristic of ours."

"It's not lightly given, but it goes deep and lasts," Grahame answered.

When he left her a few minutes afterward, Evelyn sat thinking languidly. She found him elusive. He was frank, in a way, but avoided personal topics. Then, remembering the scrap of verse he had quoted, she reflected that he was certainly a Northerner in feeling; but was truth, after all, an essential feature of the type? To be really true, one must be loyal to one's inner self and follow one's heart. But this was risky. It might mean sacrificing things one valued and renouncing advantages to be gained. Prudence suggested taking the safe, conventional course that would

meet with the approval of one's friends; but Romance stood, veiled and mysterious, beckoning her, and she thrilled with an instinctive response. Now, however, she felt that she was getting on to dangerous ground, and she joined Cliffe, who sat in the shade of the deckhouse, talking to Walthew; but they did not help her to banish her thoughts. Her father was a practical business man, and Walthew had enjoyed a training very similar to hers. It was strange that he should now seek adventures instead of riches, and stranger still that her father should show some sympathy with him.

An hour later Grahame found Macallister leaning on the rail, contentedly smoking his pipe.

"She's only making seven knots; you're letting steam down," he said.

"Weel," rejoined Macallister, "we're saving coal, and we'll be in Kingston soon enough. Then, Miss Cliffe's no' in a hurry. She's enjoying the smooth water; she telt me so."

Grahame looked hard at him.

"You have a dangerous love of meddling, Mack," he said.

"I'll no' deny it. For a' that, I've had thickheaded friends who've been grateful to me noo and then. What ye have no' is the sense to ken an opportunity."

"What do you mean by that?"

Macallister's manner grew confidential.

"She's thinking about ye and when a lassie goes so far——"

Grahame stopped him with a frown.

"I'd sooner you dropped this nonsense. It's a poor joke."

"Weel, if ye have no ambition! Selling guns to revolutionists is no' a remarkably profitable business, particularly if ye're caught, and I was thinking ye might do better. The girl's no' bad to look at; I've seen ye watching her."

"Not bad to look at!" Grahame checked himself. "We'll talk about something else."

"As ye like!"

Macallister took out a small, tapered piece of steel.

"This, ye ken, is a cotter, and the dago from the foundry put it in. He was a good fitter, but the pin's a sixty-fourth too small for the slot. Maybe it was carelessness; but there would have been trouble when the cotter shook out if Walthew hadna' heard her knocking. Yon lad has the makings o' an engineer."

Grahame looked thoughtful.

"Gomez was in Havana, and I dare say he has his agents and spies. Still, if he suspected anything, it would have been a better stroke to have watched and seized us when we had the arms on board. I'd expect him to see it."

"Weel," said Macallister grimly, "if I meet yon dago another time, I'll maybe find out something before I throw him off the mole. A good engine's nearer life than anything man has made, and wrecking her is as bad as murder."

"I don't think our opponents would stick at that," Grahame replied as he turned away.

Toward evening the barometer fell, and it grew very hot. There was no wind, the sky was cloudless, and the sea rolled back to the horizon without a ripple. For all that, there was a curious tension in the atmosphere, and Evelyn noticed that soon after

Macallister came up for a few minutes and looked carefully about, thick smoke rose from the funnel. The girl's head felt heavy, and her skin prickly; and she saw that Grahame's hawk look was more noticeable than usual. He was, however, not fidgety, and after dinner he sat talking to her and Cliffe under the awning. The air was oppressively still, and a half-moon hung like a great lamp low above the sea.

About nine o'clock Cliffe went to his cabin to look for a cigar, and Evelyn and Grahame sat silent for a while, wrapped in the mystery of the night.

Evelyn was the first to speak.

"I suppose you don't expect this calm to last?" she asked in a hushed voice.

"I'd like it to last while you're with us. But I can't promise that," Grahame answered. "If we do get a breeze it will probably soon blow itself out."

Evelyn glanced at the sea.

"It doesn't look as if it could ever be ruffled," she said. "One likes smooth water—but it's apt to get monotonous."

"That's a matter of temperament, or perhaps experience. When you've had to battle with headwinds, you appreciate a calm."

"I don't know. So far, I've had only sunshine and fine weather, but then I've always clung to the sheltered coast. It's nice to feel safe, but one sometimes wonders what there is farther out."

"Breaking seas and icy gales that drive you off your course. Now and then islands of mystic beauty, but more often surf-beaten reefs. On the whole, it's wiser to keep in smooth water."

"Perhaps," Evelyn said skeptically. "Still, there's a

fascination in adventure, if it's only as a test of courage, and one feels tempted to take a risk."

She rose with a laugh.

"I don't know why I talk like this! I'm really a very practical girl—not a sentimentalist."

She moved away, and Grahame, calling one of the men to furl the awning, went into the deckhouse and deliberately pored over a chart. There were times when it was not safe to permit himself to think of Evelyn.

CHAPTER XV

THE TORNADO

EVELYN was wakened by a peal of thunder, and as she drowsily lifted her head a blaze of lightning filled the narrow room. It vanished and there was another deafening crash. The darkness was now impenetrable, but the startled girl had seen that the deck was sharply slanted and her clothes hung at a wide angle to the paneling of the bulkhead. It was obvious that the *Enchantress* was listed down nearly on her beam ends. A confused uproar was going on, and Evelyn thought she could distinguish the beating of heavy rain upon the deckhouse. This, however, was only for a few moments, because the other noises swelled into an overwhelming din.

Dropping from her berth, she began to dress in the dark, but found it difficult to keep her footing on the slanted deck, which lurched and threw her against the lockers, while the planking worked and shook with the throb of engines. Evelyn could not hear them, but the strong vibration showed that they were running fast.

It cost her an effort to refrain from rushing out on deck. Buttons baffled her nervous fingers, the pins she tried to use instead doubled up, but she persevered. She would not leave her room until she was ready: if the worst came, she could not make an open-boat

voyage in a disheveled state. That this should seem of importance did not strike her as curious then, but she afterward blushed as she remembered her determination to look as well as possible.

At last she opened the door and stepped out, ankle-deep in water. She was to lee of the deckhouse, and, seizing the hand-rail, tried to look about. The rain did not seem so heavy now, and the house sheltered her, although clouds of spray were flying across its top. A few feet away, the low bulwark was faintly distinguishable, but ouside this there was only a dim glimmer of foam in the dark. The *Enchantress* had the wind and sea on her broadside. This surprised Evelyn, because it was not a safe position if the gale were as bad as it seemed. Then a shower of sparks leaped from the funnel and by the momentary light they gave she saw a white streak, cleanly cut off and slanting downward, at the crown of the escape pipe. Evidently, Macallister had raised more steam than he could use.

Wondering why Grahame had not brought the vessel head to wind, she moved aft cautiously, clinging to the rail, until she saw that the awning had broken loose from its lashings. Part of it thrashed about the deck, making a furious noise, but the rest, blown forward, had fouled the foresail boom, and was stretched tight, but distended like a half-filled balloon. Acting as a sail, it prevented the steamer from answering her helm. One or two very indistinct figures struggled with the canvas, but they seemed unable to master it, and Evelyn crept on until she could look through the skylight into the engine-room. It was here the real battle must be fought, for the cylinders that strained

under top pressure were the vitals of the ship. She could see them shake, as if about to burst their fastening bolts and leap from the columns, as the big crossheads banged up and down.

The iron room was well lighted, though the lamps hung at an alarming angle to the beams, and there was a confused glimmer of steel that flashed through the light and plunged into shadow. A half-naked man lay on a narrow grating, leaning down and touching a ponderous mass of metal as it swept past. In the momentary intervals before it came back he rubbed the bright slide it traveled on with a greasy swab, and the girl knew how important it was that nothing should get hot. The work was dangerous, because the least clumsiness might cost him his arm. When he stopped and turned sideways on the grating the light touched his face, and Evelyn started as she recognized Walthew.

He had enjoyed all the comforts and refinements to which she was accustomed, and it was from choice and not necessity that he was doing this rough, hazardous work. There were obviously people who did not attach an undue value to the ease that wealth could buy; this boy, for example, had left the safe, beaten track, and now, when still weak from fever, was taking the consequences without dismay. It looked as if there might be something wrong with her mother's philosophy; but she could think of this better when there was less risk of the steamer's foundering.

A man came along the deckhouse and put his arm round her waist as the ship gave a wild lurch. Evelyn laughed as she recognized her father. For a moment she had thought it was Grahame. Holding her tight,

Cliffe moved on a yard or two, and then stopped at the corner of the house, where they could see something of what was going on.

It was lighter now that the rain had stopped, and presently a ray of moonlight traveled across the sea and touched the laboring vessel. Hove down by the pressure of the wind on deckhouse and awning, she had buried her lee bulwarks and lifted her weather side. Sheets of water blew across her, and the sea looked white as snow. It was not running high: the heavy rain had beaten down the swell; but it would soon rise, and unless the vessel could be brought head to wind the combers would sweep her deck.

As the beam of moonlight widened, the figures of the toiling men grew clear. One was clinging to the top of a tall stanchion in a grotesque monkey-like attitude, trying to cut loose the awning, for a knife sparkled in his hand. Another crouched on the deck with folds of the canvas in his arms. Miguel was bent over the wheel. The tenseness of his pose and his hard-set face suggested heavy muscular strain.

Grahame stood near by, his hand on a stay, swaying with the movement of the steamer. He was bareheaded and the spray lashed his face, but there was something that reassured the girl in his tranquillity.

It was useless to speak. The voice would have been drowned by the roar of the gale, while wire-shroud and chain-guy shrilled in wild harmonies. Evelyn stood fascinated, watching the quick, tense movements of the crew.

Presently Grahame turned his head, and, seeing them against the deckhouse, pointed toward the sea. Following his gesture, Evelyn saw a blurred object

leap out of the dark. It grew suddenly into definite form as it drove across the belt of moonlight: a small wooden barque with a deck-load of timber, staggering before the hurricane.

Fluttering rags showed where her maintopsail had blown from the ropes; curved ribands, held fast at head and foot, marked what was left of her fore-course, and puny figures dotted the yards, struggling futilely with clewed-up canvas that bulged out as if inflated hard. She had a torn jib and topsails set—strips of sail that looked absurdly small by comparison with the foam-lapped hull, but they were bearing her on at tremendous speed. Caught, no doubt lightly manned, by the sudden gale, they had had no time to shorten sail and bring her head to sea. She must run with what canvas was left her until the tornado broke, unless she broached to and her heavy deckload rolled her over.

So far, Evelyn had not felt much fear. There was something in the mad fury of the elements that, for a time, banished thought of personal danger. She was overwhelmed and yet conscious of a strange excitement; but the sight of the helpless ship had a daunting effect. Belted with leaping foam, bows up, poop down, the dripping hull drove by, plowing a snowy furrow through the tormented sea. When she plunged into the dark Evelyn was glad that she had gone. She wondered what could be done in this wild weather if the *Enchantress* would not come round. But she had confidence in Grahame. As she looked at him he commandingly raised his hand.

Two men scrambled forward and a dark patch rose at the bows. It swelled and emptied, but the canvas

held, and Grahame struggled forward to help the others. The sail might stand if they could hoist it before it split. It ran higher up the stay; the *Enchantress* slowly fell off before the wind, and then leaped ahead with her bows lifted out of the foam.

Evelyn drew a deep breath of relief, for the immediate danger was over, and the vessel might run out of the worst of the storm. Cliffe nodded when she looked at him, and with some trouble they made their way into the house, where, with the door shut, they could hear themselves speak. Evelyn was wet with spray, but there was a high color in her face and her eyes shone. As she sat down, the house shook beneath a blow, and there was a savage flapping on the roof. Then something seemed driven across it, and they could hear only the wind and the sea again.

"The awning!" Cliffe said. "They've managed to cut it loose now that she's before the wind. I guess Grahame would rather have brought her head-on, but he won't have much trouble if they can keep her from broaching to. Were you scared?"

"No," Evelyn answered thoughtfully. "I suppose it was so appalling that I couldn't realize the danger. I really feel that I'd be sorry if I'd missed it."

Cliffe made a sign of comprehension.

"Well, this is the first time you've seen men hard up against a big thing. It's an illuminating experience; though a large number of people never get it. Some of them seem to imagine things go right of themselves, and there's no call now for strength and nerve. Anyhow, I was glad to feel that Grahame knew his business."

Evelyn was silent for a few moments. Her clothes

were wet and ought to be changed, but the tension on her nerves had not slackened much, and she felt restless and unwilling to be alone. Besides, there was a mild satisfaction in doing something imprudent, and she thought the storm had roused her father into a talkative mood. While indulgent to her, he was often marked by a certain reserve, which she had noticed her mother never tried to penetrate.

"I wonder why you decided to cross in this little boat, when we could have gone by one of the big passenger liners?" she said.

"Saved waiting, for one thing," Cliffe answered in a deprecatory tone. "Then I'll confess that I felt I'd like to do something that wasn't quite usual."

Evelyn laughed.

"It isn't a wish one would suspect you of."

"Well," Cliffe said with a twinkle, "I guess it was boyish, but we all have our weaknesses, though I don't often indulge mine. I find it doesn't pay. I'm a sober business man, but there's a streak of foolishness in me. Sometimes it works out and I feel that I want a frolic, for a change."

"Then you must have exercised some self-control."

"When I was a young man, I found my job square in front of me. I had to sit tight in the office, straighten out a business that had got rather complicated, and expand it if possible. It wasn't quite all I wanted to do, but I'd a notion that I could make my pile and then let myself go. It took me some years to get things straight, the pile was harder to make than I reckoned, and your mother had a use for all the money I could raise. Her ambition was to put the family high up in the social scale—and she's done it."

"So you stifled your longings and went on making money that we might have every advantage!" Evelyn said with a guilty feeling. "I feel ashamed when I realize it."

"I've been repaid," Cliffe replied. "Then, after a time, my job became congenial and got hold of me. The work became a habit; I didn't really want to break away." He paused and resumed with a humorous air: "It's only at odd moments I play with the notion that I'd like something different. I know it would jar me if I got it; and I'm getting old."

Evelyn mused. Her father's story had its pathetic side. Though they had not much in common, he had been her mother's willing slave: toiling in the city to further plans which Evelyn suspected he would not have made. In a sense, his life had been bare and monotonous; there was something he had missed. Evelyn thought that he recognized this, though not with regret.

She started as Grahame came in. Salt water dripped from him and gathered in a pool on the floor, but he turned to them with a smile.

"The wind is dropping fast, and the sea hadn't time to get up. We had some trouble at first when the awning blew out of its lashings and stopped her coming round, but she steered all right as soon as we got her before the sea."

"We were on deck most of the time," Evelyn said.

Grahame laughed as he recalled their conversation in the early evening.

"After what you must have seen," he asked, "don't you agree that there are advantages in keeping in smooth water?"

"Oh, one can't deny it. For all that, my experience to-night strengthens my belief that there's something very exhilarating in taking a risk."

She went out on deck and stood for a minute or two, holding on by a shroud. There was now no fury in the wind, and the moon was bright. The swell had gathered itself up into tumbling combers that shook their crests about the rail as the *Enchantress* lurched over them. A few torn clouds drove across the southern sky, but the rest of the wide sweep was clear and the scene was steeped in harmonies of silver and dusky blue. By daybreak the vessel would be steaming on an even keel, but Evelyn knew that she would not again be content with glassy calm and languorous tranquillity. The turmoil of the storm had made a subtle change in her; it was as if she had heard a call in the elemental clamor and her heart had answered.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RUSE

CLIFFE and his daughter were landed at Kingston, and three weeks later Grahame put into a Central-American port. The propeller was not running well, and Macallister, suspecting it was working loose on the shaft, declared that he must put the vessel on a beach where she would dry at low-water. Grahame had a few days to spare, for he could not land his cargo before the time Don Martin had fixed; but as the arms were on board he would have preferred to wait at sea, outside the regular steamers' track.

It happened that there was no repair-shop in the town, but while Macallister thought over the difficulty a tramp steamer dropped anchor, and he went off to her, remarking that he might find a friend on board. In an hour or two the gig came back, and Grahame, hearing *My boat rocks at the pier o' Leith* sung discordantly, saw that Macallister's expectations had been fulfilled. This did not surprise him, for the Scots engineer is ubiquitous and to have "wrought" at Clydebank or Fairfield is a passport to his affection.

Macallister's face was flushed and his air jaunty, but the tall, gaunt man who accompanied him looked woodenly solemn. He began by emptying a basket of

greasy tools on the *Enchantress's* white deck with the disregard for the navigating officers' feelings which the engine-room mechanic often displays. After this, he went down a rope and sat on the sand under the boat's counter, studying the loose screw while he smoked several pipes of rank tobacco, but without making any remark. Then he got up and slowly stretched his lanky frame.

"Weel," he said, "we'll make a start."

It was eleven o'clock on a very hot morning when he and Macallister lighted a blow-lamp, the flame of which showed faint and blue in the strong sunshine, and they labored on until dusk fell between six and seven in the evening. Offers of food and refreshment were uncivilly declined, and Watson ignored Grahame's invitation to spend the evening on board.

"I'll be back the morn," was all he said as he was rowed away.

"A new type!" Grahame laughed.

"He's unique," Walthew agreed. "Only addressed me twice, and then in a very personal strain. But the fellow's an artist in his way. Spent two hours softening and filing up a taper key, but it fitted air-tight when we drove it in. Something Roman about that man; means his work to last forever."

Operations were resumed the next morning, and Grahame had no doubt of the excellence of the job when the Scots seemed satisfied late in the afternoon. Then Watson said he would come back to dine when he had cleaned himself and would bring his skipper, and Grahame dubiously inspected his small stock of wine. He imagined it had not sufficient bite to please his guests.

The tramp skipper presently arrived: a short, stout man, with a humorous eye. When dinner was over and the wine finished, the party adjourned to the café Bolívar, but Grahame went with misgivings. He knew something about the habits of tramp captains, and had seen trouble result from the eccentricities of Scotch engineers. The garrison band was playing in the plaza they crossed, and citizens promenaded up and down with their wives and daughters. The clear moonlight fell upon gayly-colored dresses and faces of various shades, while here and there a jingling officer, lavishly decorated with gold-lace, added an extra touch of brightness. Nobody, however, showed a friendly interest in Grahame's party, for Americans and English were not just then regarded with much favor in the ports of the Spanish Main. Indeed, Grahame fancied that a group of slouching soldiers meant to get into his way, but as a brawl was not desirable, he tactfully avoided them.

The café was situated at the end of the square, and the party, sitting at a small table among the pillars that divided its open front from the pavement, could look down upon the moonlit harbor. The inlet was long and shallow, with an old Spanish fort among the sands at its outer end and another commanding it from a height behind the town. A cathedral stood opposite the café; and narrow, dark streets, radiating from the plaza, pierced the square blocks of houses.

Walthew and Grahame drank black coffee; but this had no attraction for the rest. The tramp captain, soon becoming genial, put his feet on a chair and beamed upon his neighbors, while Macallister, as usual, entered into talk with them. He discoursed at random

in very bad Castilian, but his remarks were humorous and in spite of the citizens' prejudices, laughter followed them. Watson sat stonily quiet, drinking fiery *caña* and frowning at the crowd.

"Ye were aye a dumb stirk at Clydebank," Macallister said to him. "Can ye no' talk instead o' glowering like a death's-head?"

"I can when I'm roused," Watson replied. "Maybe ye'll hear something frae me when I'm through wi' this bottle."

"It's the nature o' the man," Macallister informed the others and then, addressing the company, asked if anybody could sing.

No one offered to do so, and, beckoning a dark-complexioned lounger who had a guitar hung round his neck, he brought him to their table and gave him wine. Then he borrowed the guitar, and, somewhat to Grahame's surprise, began a passable rendering of a Spanish song.

The captain beat time with a bottle, some of the company sang the refrain, and, after finishing amidst applause, Macallister tried the music of his native land. In this he was less successful, for the wild airs, written for the bagpipes, did not go well upon the melancholy guitar.

"It's no' the thing at all," Watson remarked. "Ye're just plodding through it like a seven-knot tramp against the tide. Can ye no' open the throttle and give her steam?"

Before Macallister could answer, a neatly dressed gentleman brought a bottle of vermouth from a neighboring table and joined the group.

"You like a drink?" he asked politely.

Watson nodded, and, taking the small bottle, emptied half of the liqueur into his glass.

"Yon's no' so bad," he commented when he had drained the glass.

The stranger smiled as he poured out the rest of the vermouth for Watson.

"You mend the steamboat screw?" he asked carelessly.

"Yes, my friend," Watson replied, regarding the stranger out of sleepy looking eyes.

"How it come loose?"

"Tail-nut slacked up when the engines ran away in heavy weather."

"You get bad weather, then?"

"Bad enough," Watson answered.

Grahame gave him a cautious glance, but his face was expressionless. It was obvious that the stranger had mistaken him for the *Enchantress's* engineer. Watson must have realized this, but he had given the fellow misleading answers, and Grahame thought he need not run the risk of trying to warn him. He wondered, though, how far Macallister had taken Watson into his confidence.

"Small boat," said the stranger; "you find her wet when it blow. What you load?"

"Mahogany and dyewood, when it's to be got."

"Then you go to Manzanillo; perhaps to Honduras. But she not carry much; not room for big logs below."

"The big ones sit on deck," said Watson stolidly.

The man ordered some cognac, but Grahame imagined that he was wasting his hospitality. Though the Scot's legs might grow unsteady, his head would remain clear.

"There is cargo that pay better than wood," his companion suggested with a meaning smile.

"Maybe," agreed Watson. "But ye run a risk in carrying it."

"Ver' true. And when you go to sea?"

"I canna' tell. The high-press' piston must come up. She's loosened a ring."

The stranger made a few general remarks and then strolled away. He had learned, at the cost of a bottle of vermouth and some brandy, that Watson was the *Enchantress's* engineer, and the vessel would not sail for a day or two.

Grahame chuckled. He meant to leave port the next morning.

Having spent some time at the café, he felt that he could now leave his guests. They might, perhaps, indulge in boisterous amusements but he did not think they would come to harm. Indeed, if anybody were hurt in a row it would more likely be the citizens who came into collision with them.

"All right; I've had enough," Walthew said when Grahame touched him. "Mack's going to sing again, and I can't stand for that."

The moon had sunk behind the white houses as they crossed the plaza, and Grahame kept down the middle, avoiding the crowd near the bandstand and the narrow mouths of the streets.

"Who was that fellow talking to Watson?" Walthew asked.

"I don't know, but he was interested in our affairs. They have a good secret service in these countries, and we're open to suspicion. We're obviously not

yachtsmen, and the boat's too small for a regular trader."

"Do you think the man's an agent of the government we're up against?"

"I don't know. I'd hardly expect them to send their spies along the coast; but, then, these States may keep each other informed about the movements of dangerous people. Anyway, there'd be an excuse for trouble if they searched us and found the rifles."

"Sure," said Walthew thoughtfully. "It's fortunate we light out to-morrow."

He looked round as they reached the end of the plaza. The band had stopped, and the ring of lights round its stand was broken as the lamps went out, but a broad, illuminated track extended from the front of the café. The thinning crowd moved across it: a stream of black figures silhouetted against the light. Everything else was dark, and except for the soft patter of feet the city was quiet; but it had a sinister look, and Walthew instinctively kept away from the trees in the small *alameda* they skirted. He was an Anglo-Saxon, and would not shrink from a danger that could be faced in daylight, but he hated the stealthy attack in the dark and the hidden intrigues the Latin half-breeds delight in.

When they reached the beach he stumbled over a small anvil lying near high-water mark, and after another few steps trod upon a hammer.

"They have left all their tools about," he said. "Shall we call the boys and put the truck on board?"

"I think not," Grahame replied. "It's the marine engineer's privilege to make as much mess as he likes,

and he generally resents its being cleaned up without his permission. Besides, their leaving the things suggests that the job's not finished."

They pushed off the dinghy and boarded the steamer. The tide had flowed round her, but she would not float for an hour or two, and Walthew, sitting on the rail, glanced down the harbor. It was now very dark, but the water had a phosphorescent gleam. The *Enchantress's* cable was marked by lambent spangles, and there was a flicker of green fire along the tramp's dark side. Her riding-lights tossed as she swung with the languid swell, and away at the harbor mouth two bright specks pierced the dark. A small gunboat had anchored at dusk, and as the fort had fired a salute she was evidently a foreigner. Walthew felt curious about her nationality, and wondered why she lay where she commanded the entrance instead of mooring near the town. Grahame, however, did not seem disturbed, and they presently sat down to a game of chess in the saloon.

Although the ports were open, it was very hot, and when the kerosene lamp flickered in the draughts an unpleasant smell filled the room. The men felt languid and their attention wandered from the dragging game. At last Walthew threw the pieces roughly into the box.

"You'd have seen what I was getting after with the bishop if you hadn't been thinking of something else," he said. "It's been a mighty long game; Mack ought to have come back."

Grahame nodded agreement, and they went out on deck. The town was quiet, and, so far as they could see, only one light burned in it, between the plaza and the *alameda*. Then an uproar broke out, the clamor reaching them distinctly over the night water. Gra-

hame, running to the engine-room, shook the drowsy half-breed on watch and ordered him to stir the fires, which had been lighted and damped. Then he dropped over the rail into the dinghy with Walthew, and as soon as they jumped ashore they started for the plaza on a run.

"Sounds like a *jamboree,*" Walthew said. "When things begin to hum you'll find Mack somewhere around; and that tramp captain looked as if he could get on a jag."

"He had a wicked eye," Grahame breathlessly agreed.

As they entered the plaza, a noisy crowd, which seemed to be getting larger rapidly, surged toward them. In the background the café Bolívar was still lighted, and close at hand a lamp burned at the top of a tall pole. For all that, it was difficult to make out anything except a mass of people pressing about a smaller group, and Grahame roughly flung two or three excited citizens aside before he could see what was going on. Then he was not surprised to note a party of three Britons retreating in good order before an obviously hostile mob. The tramp captain had lost his hat and his jacket was torn, but he carried a champagne bottle like a club, and his hot, red face had a pugnacious look. Macallister trailed the leg of a broken iron chair, and Watson seemed to have armed himself with part of the chair's back. He was hurling virulent epithets at the throng, while Macallister sang a sentimental ballad in an unsteady voice.

As Grahame and Walthew drew nearer, the crowd closed in as if to cut off the others' retreat, but a shout from Watson dominated the growing uproar.

"Oot o' the way, ye dirt! Drap yon deevil wi' the knife!"

Macallister, still singing, swung the leg of the chair and a man went down upon the stones, the knife he held flying from his hand. There was a thud as the captain's champagne bottle descended on somebody's head; and Watson sprang forward, whirling the broken casting. The crowd gave back before his rush and then scattered as Grahame and Walthew appeared in the gap. The fugitives stopped; and during the moment's breathing space Grahame noticed that a smashed guitar, adorned with gaudy ribbons, hung round Macallister's neck.

"It was yon fool thing made the trouble," Watson explained. "He racked her till she buckled, but she would not keep the tune, and we had to pit her owner below the table. Then an officer wi' a sword would interfere and when he got a bit tap wi' a bottle we were mobbed by the roomful o' swine."

He paused as somebody threw a stone at him, and then addressed the crowd in warning:

"We'll no' be responsible for what may happen til ye if we lose our tempers!"

The mob had been closing in again, but it fell back when two white-uniformed rural guards with pistols drawn pushed through. Grahame spoke to them in Castilian, and they stopped. While they asked him questions, another man, whom they saluted with respect, joined them.

"It is not permitted to make a disturbance in this city," the official said to Grahame. "We will inquire into the matter to-morrow. You will go on board your vessel now."

"I'm no' going," Watson declared when Grahame translated the order. "Took a room at Hotel Sevillana, and I want to see the dago who would pit me oot."

"Better humor him," advised the captain. "Obstinate beast when he gets a notion into his head. If he's not on board in the morning, I'll send a boatful of deckhands for him."

Grahame explained that the engineer wished to spend the night ashore, and the official looked thoughtful.

"Very well," he said. "One of the guards will see him to his hotel. It is necessary for him to go now."

"Ye can tell him I'm ready," Watson replied, and added in a low voice as he passed Grahame: "Get away to sea as soon as she floats!"

He went off with his escort and the official said something aside to the remaining guard, who saluted and told the others to follow him. The crowd had scattered, and nobody interfered with the party on their way to the harbor.

"I will wait until I see you go on board," the guard said when they reached the beach. "You will be called upon some time to-morrow."

"They'd have been wiser if they had begun their investigations now," Grahame remarked as they launched the dinghy. "She'll be afloat in half an hour. Do you feel up to running the engine, Mack? If not, Walthew must do the best he can."

"I could take her oot if I was drunk and I'm far frae that," Macallister declared. "Looks as if ye had no' allooed for the steadiness o' the Scottish head. Noo, there's Watson, and I'll no' say he was quite sober,

but he could spoil yon dago's game. Maybe ye're beginning to understand why he would sleep ashore. They think ye canna' get away without him."

"I see that," said Grahame. "Better send your fireman to collect your tools when Miguel looses the stern mooring. And try to restrain your feelings if things are not quite right below. It's important that we should get away quietly."

They reached the *Enchantress,* and preparations for departure were silently begun.

They must first slip past the watching fort, and then elude the foreign gunboat. They knew the consequences if they were caught.

CHAPTER XVII

ELUDING THE GUNBOAT

THE night was very dark. Here and there a lone star peeped out bravely, but it could shine but faintly through the heavy mist that was settling down over the *Enchantress.*

Grahame, the leadline in his hand, leaned anxiously on the rail, watching the foam boil about the vessel's side. Her keel stirred in the sand and the propeller was beating hard; but she did not move. To make things worse, the disturbed water broke noisily on the beach and the thud of engines could be heard at some distance. Grahame had not complied with the formalities required before leaving port, but he carried a dangerous cargo and he feared that he might be detained unless he got away at once. The *Enchantress,* however, was not yet afloat, and he reluctantly signaled for steam to be shut off.

Walthew came up when the engines stopped, and Grahame sat down on the ledge of the door. It was very quiet when the splash of water died away, and the darkness and silence reacted upon the men's tense nerves. They found inaction singularly hard.

"You have got to take her out the minute she's off the ground," Walthew said. "To be caught getting ready to leave would give us away."

"Sure thing! The Port Captain's guard watches the beach; they've sentries at the fort and a wire to the town; and there's a gunboat in the entrance. Our job doesn't look easy."

"Ye have quarter o' an hour yet, but that's all," Macallister said as he joined them. "If I canna' give the engines steam then, she'll blow off and rouse the town."

They waited anxiously, Grahame glancing at his watch and walking to the rail, where he felt the lead-line; but the water rose with exasperating slowness. Then suddenly a jet of steam broke with a muffled throb from the escape-pipe, and Macallister jumped up.

"Ye have got to start her noo!" he said.

Walthew followed him below; the engines clanked; the propeller spun; and Grahame hauled the lead in with a breath of relief, for the line grew taut as the vessel moved. Then he stood in the main rigging, where he could see better and where Miguel, at the helm, could watch his signaling hand. With screw throbbing gently, the *Enchantress* crept away into the dark. Her gray hull would be invisible from the shore, but phosphorescence blazed about her bows and her wake was a trail of fire.

The tramp steamer rode not far ahead, a mysterious shadowy bulk, with the gleam of her anchor-lights on the water, but as the *Enchantress* stole past a voice called out to her:

"Good luck!"

Grahame did not answer, but he was grateful. The tramp captain understood why his engineer had stayed ashore. Macallister's friends were staunch; the Scots stood by one another.

The light in the plaza grew dim astern, and the blurred, dark beach was rapidly slipping by. There was a lift on the water as they drew near the harbor mouth; but the fort had yet to be passed, and Grahame searched the shore with his glasses. Little by little he made out a formless mound, which grew more distinct. There was no light in the building, but he knew that sentries were supposititiously keeping watch beside the guns. One or two of these were modern and no vessel was allowed to leave port at night without official permission and a notification to the commandant. If the steamer were seen, refusal to stop would be followed by the roar of a gun. But Grahame did not mean to stop so long as she was not struck.

For the next few minutes he felt his nerves tingle, but the fort was dark and silent and only the soft splash along the beach broke the stillness. The shadowy building dropped astern and he turned his glasses upon the harbor mouth. Two lights showed where the gunboat lay, and, some distance beyond them, a dim, pulsating radiance glimmered. This marked where the open water swell broke upon the shoals. Grahame hoped that it would cover the *Enchantress's* luminous wake; besides, the roar of the surf might drown the thud of engines, which carries far on a calm night.

Jumping down from the rigging, he rapped sharply on the engine-hatch, and Walthew ran quickly up the ladder.

"Throttle her down," Grahame said. "If I knock once, stop her; if twice, give her all the steam you can."

Walthew nodded to show that he understood, for it might be dangerous to use the telegraph gong; and

then he disappeared below while Grahame stood still, steadying the glasses on the deckhouse top.

With screw spinning slowly, the *Enchantress* glided on, and the gunboat's hull grew into shape against the sky. Grahame was glad that he had the land behind him and his vessel was small, but he beckoned Miguel to let her swing inshore. There was a shoal on that side, marked by a line of foam; but he must take the risk of going too close.

A phosphorescent flicker played about the vague blackness of the gunboat's bows; the light from the lamp on her forestay showed part of the deck, and then receded as she rolled. Grahame could make out an anchor hanging ready to let go and a man standing by her rail, until the light reeled and the figure was lost in gloom. It seemed to him that the *Enchantress* must be seen, and he wondered whether the other vessel had her boats in the water. He suspected that she belonged to the government which Don Martin meant to overthrow, and it would be difficult to get away from her if she had steam up. She was now abreast of him, but there was no sign of activity on board. The *Enchantress* crept on. The gunboat dropped back to her quarter. Then there was a sudden harsh rattle, and Grahame gasped. But a splash relieved the tension, because he knew it was only the ash-hoist bringing up furnace cinders.

She drew further aft and began to fade; but Grahame now saw danger ahead. The *Enchantress* was throwing fiery spray about her bows and rolling as she forged slowly through broken water. The shoal was close ahead and, taking a sounding, he found scarcely a fathom under the keel. This was enough, however,

and, beckoning to Miguel, he let her go until the darkness astern was broken only by the gunboat's lights. Then, finding deeper water, he struck the engine-hatch.

"We're clear!" he called down in an exultant voice. "Drive her, but make no sparks!"

The *Enchantress* began to tremble, and a few moments later loose stanchions rattled and deck-planks shook as she leaped through the long swell with green fire blazing in the wake of her thudding screw. Grahame laughed softly, and sat down to light a cigarette. He imagined that when morning came there would be several badly disappointed intriguers in the port he had left.

He thought it best, however, not to proceed directly to his destination, and it was three days later when he ran in behind a point, and anchored in shallow water. It was daylight, but the *Enchantress's* gray hull and slender spars would be hard to see against the land, and there was no sign of habitation on the sweep of desolate coast. A cliff rose behind the steamer, and then for some miles the dazzling sea broke in a fringe of lace-like foam on a beach of yellow sand. On the landward side of this, glossy-green jungle rolled away and merged into taller forest that was presently lost in haze. No smoke streaked the horizon, and there was not a boat on the beach, but while Grahame carefully watched, two appeared from behind a reef, and he put down his glasses with a smile.

"Our friends!" he said to Walthew. "You might get the winch ready while we take the hatches off."

An hour later a small party sat in the shade of the new stern awning. The boats had gone away loaded,

but they had left Don Martin and three companions on board. Father Agustin, whose rusty black cassock jarred upon the blaze of light and color, leaned back in a canvas chair with a wineglass in his olive-tinted hand.

"I'm surprised to find you in such company, Father," Grahame said to him.

The priest's eyes twinkled.

"It is not only the rich and respected we are sent out to seek, though I think they need us as much as the others."

"You might find their help useful," Walthew suggested.

"True, if one could buy it! As a rule, they do not give, but sell, and the price they ask is often high."

"Some bribes are hard to resist when they are offered in the name of charity; for example, hospitals founded and new churches built," Grahame interposed. "These are things you can make good use of."

Father Agustin looked at him steadily.

"An honest man does not take a bribe, as you, my son, should know," he said.

"Ah!" Grahame returned carelessly. "I did not think you had heard of—a certain affair."

Walthew gave him a surprised glance, but Father Agustin smiled.

"I hear many curious things. Besides, my companions take precautions. Sometimes they find them needed."

"I suppose if I had done what I was asked and pocketed the reward, I should have met with an accident shortly afterward?" Grahame suggested.

"One does not talk of such matters, señor, among trusted friends," one of the men interposed.

"Your intelligence department seems to be well organized, but there's ground for believing the opposition's is quite as good," Grahame said, and related what had happened at their last port.

"Care will be needed after this," said Don Martin. "Now that they know your boat, it is fortunate we changed the landing place; but you are safe here. This coast is low and unhealthy; the President's friends are prosperous and do not live in the swampy jungle."

"One can understand that," Grahame responded. "Your appeal is to those who must live how and where they can. No doubt, they suffer now and then for helping you."

"Ah!" exclaimed one of the Spaniards, "*how* they suffer! If you give me leave, señores, I can tell you startling things."

They listened with quickening interest, and he kept his promise well, for there is in southern peoples, contaminated by darker blood, a vein of sensual cruelty that sometimes leads to the perpetration of unutterable horrors. Grahame's face grew quietly stern, Walthew's hot and flushed, and Macallister clenched his hand, for the tales they heard fired their blood.

"You have told us enough," Walthew said at last. "I went into this business because I was looking for adventure and wanted to make some money—but I mean to see it through if it costs me all I have!" He turned to his comrades. "How do you feel about it?"

"Much as you do," Grahame answered quietly, and Macallister put his hand on Sarmiento's arm.

"I'm with ye, if ye mean to make a clean sweep o' yon brutes."

"I believe their reckoning will come, but our bargain stands," said Don Martin. "We need arms, and will pay for all you bring. Still, I am glad your hearts are with us. It is sentiment that carries one farthest."

"How have you been getting on since we last met?" Walthew asked.

"We make progress, though there are difficulties. One must fight with the purse as well as the sword, and the dictator's purse is longer than ours. Of late, he has been getting money and spending it with a free hand."

"Do you know where he gets it?" Grahame asked thoughtfully.

"So far, we have not found out. But it is foreign money, and he must give what belongs to the country in exchange."

"An easy plan!" Walthew said. "Makes the country pay for keeping him in power. I guess you'll have to meet the bill when you get in."

"That is so," Don Martin agreed. "It forces our hand. We must get in before he leaves us no resources at all."

Grahame thought of Cliffe, and wondered about his business with Gomez; but he decided to say nothing of this.

"Is Castillo still at liberty?" he asked.

"He is watched, but we have been able to protect him. A man of passion and fervor who will rouse the people when the right time comes."

"But perhaps not a good plotter?"

Father Agustin gave Grahame a shrewd glance.

"We do not all possess your northern self-restraint, though one admits its value. Señor Castillo follows a poetical ideal."

"So I imagined. Cold conviction sometimes leads one farther."

They were silent for a minute or two, and then one said:

"We have been anxious about Castillo. It is not that we doubt his sincerity."

"You doubt his staying power?"

Father Agustin made an assenting gesture.

"Our friend is ardent, but a fierce fire soon burns out. The danger is that when warmth is needed there may be no fuel left."

"I think you should try to guard him from pressure he is unfit to stand," Grahame suggested. "One cannot always choose one's tools, but if you are careful he may last until his work is done."

"It is so," Father Agustin agreed. "One loves the ring of fine, true steel, but it is fortunate that metal of softer temper has its use, though it sometimes needs skillful handling."

"He kens!" exclaimed Macallister. "Ye may rake stuff that will serve ye weel from the scrap heap o' humanity, and there's times when it's a comfort to remember that. But I'm surprised to find ye meddling with politics."

"I am not a politician; it is not permitted. But I may hate injustice, and there is no canon that bids me support what is evil. I came here as your guest with other friends, and if they honor me with their confidence I cannot refuse; nor do I think it a grave offense to give them a word of advice."

"Good advice may prove more dangerous to their enemies than rifles," Grahame said.

Father Agustin mused for a few moments.

"Our friends' real task begins with their triumph," he said gravely; "for that, at best, can but mean a clearing of the ground. Man builds slowly, but to destroy is easy, and many see no farther."

"But when the building is tottering and rotten?"

"Sometimes it may be repaired, piece by piece, but that is not your plan." Father Agustin spread out his hands. "If you build on a sound foundation, your new work will stand; but the edifice of the State cannot be cemented with hatred and envy. This responsibility is yours and not your enemies'. But one looks to the future with hope as well as doubt."

They then discussed the landing of the next cargo, and the general course of operations, but while they plotted with Spanish astuteness Grahame imagined that the quiet priest was the brain of the party.

After a time, the boats came back for another load, and when sunset streaked the water with a lurid glow the guests took their leave and the *Enchantress* steamed out to sea.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TEST OF LOVE

THE hot summer day was over and the light beginning to fade when Evelyn came down the steps of a country house in northern Maine. Banner's Post stood at the foot of a hillside among the dark pines, and the murmur of running water echoed about its walls. It belonged to Mrs. Willans, Mrs. Cliffe's sister, for Willans, who had bought the house at his wife's command, seldom came there and did not count. Mrs. Willans wanted a peaceful retreat where she and her friends, when jaded by social activities, could rest and recuperate in the silence of the woods. She had many interests and what she called duties, but she had of late felt called upon, with her sister's full approval, to arrange a suitable marriage for her niece. Henry Cliffe was not really rich.

Evelyn was dressed in the latest summer fashion, and the thin, light clothes became her. The keen mountain breezes had given her a fine color, and she looked very fresh and young by contrast with the jaded business man at her side. Cliffe wore an old gray suit that Evelyn had never seen and shabby leggings. A creel hung round his shoulders, and he carried a fishing-rod. His face was lined and pale, but when they left the garden and entered the woods Evelyn was sur-

prised to note that his thin figure harmonized with the scattered boulders and the ragged pines. To some extent, this might be accounted for by the neutral tint of his clothes, but he somehow looked at home in the wilderness. Though he had once or twice gone off with an old friend on a shooting trip, she had never thought of her father as a sport.

"It is curious that you make me feel you belong to the bush," she said.

"I used to go fishing when I was a boy," Cliffe replied with a deprecatory smile. "I've never had much time for it since; but there's nothing I'm fonder of."

Evelyn found something pathetic in his answer. He had very few opportunities for indulging in the pastimes he liked, and now he was going out to fish with a keen eagerness that showed how scarce such pleasures were. His enjoyment was essentially natural; her friends' enthusiasm for the amusements Mrs. Willans got up was artificial and forced. They had too much, and her father not enough.

"I hope the trout will rise well," she said. "We were surprised to hear that you were coming down."

"I found I could get away for the week-end. Have you been having a good time?"

"Yes, in a way. I have everything I ought to like; something amusing to do from morning to night, the kind of people I've been used to about me, and Aunt Margaret sees that nobody is dull."

She had had more than she mentioned, for Gore was staying at Banner's Post, and had devoted himself to her entertainment with a frank assiduity that had roused the envy of other guests. Evelyn admitted feel-

ing flattered, for Gore had many advantages, and his marked preference had given her an importance she had not always enjoyed.

"And yet you're not quite satisfied?" Cliffe suggested with a shrewd glance.

"Perhaps I'm not, but I don't know. Is one ever satisfied?"

"One ought to be now and then when one is young. Make the most of the pleasures you can get, but aim at the best."

Evelyn mused for a few minutes. She could treat her father with confidence. He understood her, as her mother seldom did.

"What is the best?" she asked.

"To some extent, it depends on your temperament; but it goes deeper than that. There's success that palls and gratification that doesn't last. One soon gets old and the values of things change; you don't want to feel, when it's too late, that there's something big and real you might have had and missed."

"Have you felt this?"

"No," Cliffe answered quietly; "I get tired of the city now and then and long for old clothes, a boat, and a fishing-rod, but these are things it doesn't hurt a man to go without. I have a home to rest in and a wife and daughter to work for. An object of that kind helps you through life."

"My trouble is that I don't seem to have any object at all. I used to have a number, but I'm beginning now to doubt whether they were worth much. But I'm afraid you have made a sacrifice for our sakes."

Cliffe looked at her thoughtfully.

"My belief is that you always have to make some

sacrifice for anything that's worth while." He laughed. "But right now fishing is more in my line than philosophy!"

He followed the little path that led to the stream, and Evelyn turned back slowly through the quiet woods. Her father's remarks had led her into familiar but distasteful thought. It was perhaps true that one must make some sacrifice to gain what was best worth having; but she had been taught to seize advantages and not to give things up. Now she could have wealth, a high position, and social influence, which were of value in her world, and in order to gain them she had only to overcome certain vague longings and the rebellious promptings of her heart. Gore wanted her, and she had been pleasantly thrilled to realize it; perhaps she had, to some extent, tried to attract him. It was foolish to hesitate when the prize was in her reach; but she did not feel elated as she went back to the house.

She lingered among the last of the trees. They lifted their black spires against the sky, the air was filled with their resinous scent, and faint, elfin music fell from their tops. Far above, the bald summit of Long Mountain shone a deep purple, though trails of mist that looked like lace were drawn about its shoulders. Then the pines rolled down, straggling at first, but growing thicker and taller until they merged into the dark forest that hid the giant's feet. The wild beauty of the scene and the calm of the evening reacted upon the girl; she felt it was a trivial life that she and her friends led.

Rousing herself with an effort, she left the woods and entered the well-kept garden. It had an exotic

look; the bright-colored borders that edged the lawn jarred upon the austere beauty of the wilderness. Banner's Post was tamely pretty, and Nature had meant the spot to be grand. Still, the nickeled sprinklers that flung glistening showers across the smooth grass, and the big gasolene mower, belonged to her world, in which Nature was kept in her place by civilized art.

She saw Gore at the bottom of the steps in the midst of a group which included two attractive girls, and she was conscious of some satisfaction when he left his companions and came toward her.

"Luck has been against me all day," he said when he came up. "It seemed impossible to find you except in the center of what was going on. Now we'll run away for a little while."

His manner suggested a right to her society, and he turned toward the woods without waiting for her consent, but Evelyn thought he would have acted more wisely had he chosen a quiet nook on the veranda. Reggie was a product of his luxurious age; he was in his right place in a comfortable chair or moving gracefully about a polished floor with smartly dressed people in the background. Though not wholly artificial, and having some force of character, he failed to harmonize with the note of primitive grandeur struck by the rugged pines.

It was different with Evelyn when they sat down on a boulder. Her dress was in the latest fashion, but she had the gift of revealing something of her real personality through her attire. Its blue-gray tint matched the soft coloring of the lichened rock, and the lines of her tall figure were marked by a classical sever-

ity of grace. Then, her eyes were grave and her face was calm. It was her misfortune that she had not yet realized herself, but had accepted without much question the manners of her caste and the character Mrs. Cliffe had, so to speak, superimposed upon her.

"It's good to be quiet for a change," Gore said. "When I'm with you I feel that I needn't talk unless I want to. That's a relief, because it's when I feel least that I talk the most. You're tranquilizing."

"I'm not sure you're complimentary. Nowadays a girl is expected to be bright if she can't be brilliant."

"That's not your real line. Brilliance is often shallow, a cold, reflected sparkle. One has to get beneath the surface to understand you."

"Perhaps it's true of everybody," Evelyn answered with a smile. "Still, we're not taught to cultivate virtues that can't be seen."

"You can't cultivate the best of them; they've got to be an inherent, natural part of you. But I'm getting off the track—I do now and then."

Evelyn guessed what he meant to say, but although it would mark a turning-point in her life, and she did not know her answer, she was very calm. While she had, for the most part, allowed her mother to direct her actions, she had inherited Cliffe's independence of thought and force of will. So far, she had not exerted them, but she meant to do so now.

Looking up, she saw Long Mountain's towering crest cut in lonely grandeur against the fading green and saffron of the sky. The mist upon its shoulders shone faintly white against blue shadows; the pines had grown taller and blacker, and the sound of running water alone broke the silence. The resinous

smells were keener, and there was a strange repose in the long ranks of stately trees. Nature had filled the stony wilds with stern beauty, and Evelyn instinctively felt the call of the strong, fruitful earth. One must be real and, in a sense, primitive, here.

"This," she said, indicating the shadowy landscape, "is very grand. We don't give much thought to it, but it has its influence."

"I guess it's all quite fine," Gore agreed absently. "It would make a great summer-resort if they ran in a branch-railroad. In fact, I've imagined that Willans had something of the kind in view; he has a genius for developing real estate."

"An unthinkable desecration!" Evelyn exclaimed.

"Well," he said in a quiet voice, "if it would please you, I'd buy Banner's Post and all the land back to the lake, and nobody but my game-wardens should disturb it except when you let me come up here with you. Then you could teach me to appreciate the things you like."

The girl was touched, for he belonged to the cities, and had nothing in common with the rocky wilds, but she knew that he would keep his word and indulge her generously. Nor was she offended by the touch of commercial spirit, though she would rather he had offered something that would cost him effort of body or mind.

"I'm afraid you wouldn't find me worth the sacrifice you would have to make," she said. "Your tastes don't lie that way."

He made a gesture of dissent.

"None of them are very strong, and I know that you go farther in everything than I can. You're

elusive, but I've felt, for a long time, that if I could reach and win you, you'd help me along. That's my strongest argument and what I really meant to say. Surely, you have seen that I wanted you."

Evelyn felt guilty, because she had seen this and had not repulsed him. She did not love the man, but love was not thought essential in her circle and she had never been stirred by passion.

"I felt that I couldn't get hold of you," he went on; "you were not ready. We were friends and that was something, but I was looking for a change in you, some hint of warmth and gentleness."

"And do you think I am ready now?"

"No; I only hoped so. I feared I might be wrong. But I began to find holding myself back was getting too hard, and I was afraid somebody else might come along who had the power to rouse you. I believe you can be roused."

"I wonder!" she said in a curious tone.

"You make people love you," he broke out. "That's a proof that when the time comes you're capable of loving. But I only ask to be near you and surround you with what you like best. There's a rare aloofness in you, but you're flesh and blood. When you have learned how I love you, you can't hold out."

Evelyn was silent, hesitating, with a troubled face. She liked him; he was such a man as her mother meant her to marry and, until the last few weeks, she had acquiesced in her obvious fate. Now, however, something prompted her to rebel, although prudence and ambition urged her to yield.

As he watched her in keen suspense, Gore suddenly lost his head. The next moment his arm was round

her and he drew her forward until she was pressed against him with her face crushed against his. At first she did not struggle, and he thought she was about to yield, until he felt her tremble and her face was suddenly turned away. Then she put her hand on his shoulder and firmly held him back while she slipped from his relaxing grasp. Gore knew that he had blundered. Letting his arms drop, he waited until she turned to him, without anger, although her eyes were very bright and her color was high.

"I'm sorry, Reggie, but it's impossible for me to marry you."

"You are sure?" he asked rather grimly. "This is important to me, you know."

"Yes," she said with signs of strain; "I am sure. I think I wish it had been possible, but it isn't. You have convinced me."

He was silent for a moment.

"It cuts pretty deep," he said slowly. "I've been afraid all along that even if you took me you'd never be really within my reach. I guess I've got to bear it and let you go."

He rose and stood looking at her irresolutely, and then, with a gesture of acquiescence, abruptly turned away.

When he had gone, Evelyn sat still in the gathering dusk. She had, at first, submitted to his embrace, because she wished to find in any emotion he was capable of arousing an excuse for marrying him. But she had felt nothing except repulsion. Then in a flash the truth was plain; any closer relationship than that of friend would make her loathe the man she in some ways admired. This was disturbing, but little by little

she began to realize that his touch had a strange after-effect. It had stirred her to warmth, but not toward him. Longings she had not thought herself capable of awoke within her; she was conscious of a craving for love and of a curious tenderness. Only, Reggie was not the man. He had roused her, but she did not know whether she ought to be grateful for that. She blushed as she struggled with her rebellious feelings, and then resolutely pulled herself together. Her mother must be told.

Mrs. Cliffe was resting before dinner when Evelyn entered her room and sat down without speaking.

"What is the matter?" Mrs. Cliffe asked with a premonition that something had gone wrong. "Why do you come in, in this dramatic way?"

"I didn't mean to be dramatic," Evelyn answered quietly. "Still, perhaps I was rather highly strung. Reggie asked me to marry him, and I told him I could not."

Mrs. Cliffe sat up suddenly, and there was an angry sparkle in her eyes.

"Then I think you must be mad! What led you to this absurd conclusion?"

"It's hard to explain," Evelyn answered with a faint smile. "I suppose I couldn't give you any very logical reasons."

"Then it may not be too late to put things right!" Mrs. Cliffe saw a ray of hope.

"I'm afraid it is. I think Reggie knows that—he was very considerate. There is no use in your trying to do anything; I must have my own way in this."

Mrs. Cliffe was painfully surprised. The girl had suddenly developed and revealed unsuspected capaci-

ties. She had grown like her father, who, for all his patience, was sometimes immovable. There was inflexibility in Evelyn's attitude; her face was hard and determined.

"Very well," she acquiesced. "Your father must be told, and I don't know what he will do about it."

"I would rather tell him myself," Evelyn said.

This was not what Mrs. Cliffe wanted, but the girl moved to the door as she finished speaking, and her mother sat down, burning with indignation. Her authority had been outraged, she felt overcome, and did not leave her room all evening.

Evelyn found Cliffe on the veranda, and took him down the steps before she told him what she had done. He listened without surprise; indeed, she thought his manner was rather curiously sympathetic.

"Well," he said, "in a way I'm sorry. Reggie's a good fellow as far as he goes. But I imagined you liked him. Why did you refuse?"

"It isn't very plain," Evelyn answered. "I felt I had to. Perhaps Long Mountain had something to do with it."

Cliffe smiled, but not with amusement, and Evelyn saw that he understood. Somehow she had expected him to do so and she was touched when he gently pressed her arm.

"After all, you're the person most interested, and you must please yourself—though your mother will be badly disappointed," he said. "It's possible we're wiser in the woods than in the city. One sees the things that matter more clearly away from the turmoil."

CHAPTER XIX

THE CUBAN SPY

GORE left Banner's Post abruptly, to Evelyn's relief, and on the morning after his departure she and Cliffe stood on the steps before the other guests had come down to breakfast. It had rained all night, the mist hung low about Long Mountain's side, and a fresh wind woke waves of sound from the rustling pines. A creel hung round Cliffe's shoulders, and he contemplated the dripping woods with a smile of half-apologetic satisfaction.

"The fishing should be great to-day!" he exclaimed. "But I feel that I'm playing truant. I ought to be back at the office. Guess the trout I catch will cost me high; but the temptation is pretty strong when I see the water rise."

"I'm glad you have been rash for once," Evelyn replied. "Besides, you have an office full of people who can look after things for you."

Cliffe shook his head.

"That's the excuse I tried to make, but it won't quite work. If you want to be a successful operator, you have to sit tight with your finger on the pulse of the market. A beat or two more or less makes a big difference. Finance soon gets feverish."

"And you are one of the doctors who send its temperature up or down."

"No; that's a wrong idea. Once on a time the big men did something of the kind, but now the dollar's a world-force that's grown too strong for them. We gave it a power we can't control; it drives us into combines and mergers we didn't plan. It's a blind force that rolls along undirected, over our bodies if we get in its way. All we can do is to try to guess its drift. The successful man is the one who does so first."

"I wonder whether you're to be pitied or envied. The work must be absorbing, and it's simple, in a way."

"Simple!" Cliffe exclaimed.

"Well, you have an object; your aims are definite and you know, more or less, how to carry them out. We others, who have no purpose in life, spend our time in amusements that leave us dissatisfied. When we stop to think, we feel that we might do something better, but we don't know what it is. The outlook is blank."

Cliffe gave her a sharp glance. Evelyn had changed in the last few months, and she had been strangely quiet since her refusal of Gore. Seeing his interest, she laughed.

"I'm not asking for sympathy; and I mustn't keep you from the trout. Go and catch as many as you can. It must be nice to feel that you have only to pick up a fishing-rod and be young again."

She walked to the gate with him, but Cliffe stopped when they reached it, for a big automobile was lurching down the uneven road. The mud splashed about the car indicated distance traveled at furious speed, but it slowed at the bend near the gate, and Cliffe sighed as he recognized Robinson.

"I guess this stops my fishing," he said in a resigned tone. Dropping his rod and creel, he jumped on to the footboard as the driver cautiously took the gate, and Evelyn smiled as the car rolled up the drive. She was sorry that her father had lost his favorite sport, but his prompt surrender of it was characteristic. He was first of all a man of business.

"Wired for an auto' to meet me when I left the train," Robinson told him. "It was raining pretty hard, and they don't do much grading on these mountain roads, but I made the fellow rush her along as fast as he could." He took some letters from his wallet. "Read these and think them over while I get breakfast."

Half an hour afterward they sat in a corner of the veranda, where Mrs. Willans' guests left them alone. These quiet, intent men of affairs obviously did not belong to their world.

"Well?" Robinson said.

"One of two things has got to be done; there's no middle course."

Robinson nodded.

"That's true. Middle courses generally lead to nothing."

"Very well. We can cut out our deal with President Altiera, lose the money we have spent, and let the concessions go; or we can pay up again, hang on, and put the matter through."

"What's your opinion? The fellow asks for more."

"Do you mean to be guided by me?"

"Yes," Robinson said. "Take which you think is the right line; I'll stand in."

"It's pretty hard to see. We'll make good if we get

the concessions; but the President's up against a bigger thing than he thought. It's going to cost him and us some money to head off the revolutionists, but if we don't drop out right now, we've got to brace up and put it over. Well, as I'm fixed, it's a big risk. My money's making good interest, and if I go on, I've got to sell out stock I meant to hold. A set-back would be a serious thing for me. I want a few minutes to think it over."

Robinson had confidence in Cliffe's integrity and judgment.

"An hour, if you like," he said; "then we'll have to pull out, whatever you decide."

For a long while Cliffe sat silent with knitted brows. His wife made claims upon his means that he sometimes found it hard to satisfy; and it was his ambition that his daughter should be rich. After carefully pondering the letters, he saw that he might be involved in a conflict with forces whose strength he could not estimate, and defeat would cost him the fruit of several years' labor. Yet the prize to be won was tempting, and he could take a risk. Besides, they already had put a good deal of money into it.

"Well," he said at last, "I've made up my mind."

"To hold on, I guess," Robinson suggested with a smile.

"That's so," Cliffe answered in a quiet voice. "What's more, I'm going out to look into things myself. We can talk it over on the way to town. I'll be ready as soon as I've told my wife."

Robinson took out his watch.

"Give you half an hour if we're to catch the train," he said.

Cliffe met Evelyn in the broad hall, and told her that he would have to go south at once.

"Take me with you, won't you?" she begged. "I want to get away from Banner's Post."

Cliffe hesitated a moment.

"Why, yes," he then said; "I see no reason why you shouldn't go—particularly as your mother means to stay with Margaret Willans."

When, a half hour later, the car started from the bottom of the steps and Mrs. Cliffe turned away with a wave of her hand, Evelyn stood in the drive, asking herself bluntly why she wished to accompany her father. A longing for change had something to do with it; she was getting tired of an aimless and, in a sense, uneventful life, for it was true that occupations that had once been full of pleasurable excitement had begun to pall. But this was not her only object. Grahame was somewhere on the coast she meant to visit, and she might meet him. Evelyn admitted with a blush that she would like to do so.

The next morning a telegram arrived from Cliffe, directing her to join him in town, and ten days later she stood, at evening, on a balcony of the Hotel International, in Havana. It was getting dark, but a few lamps were lighted in the *patio,* and the moonlight touched one white wall. The air was hot and heavy, and filled with exotic smells, and the sound of alien voices gave Evelyn the sense of change and contrast she had sought. Yet she knew that, so far, the trip had been a failure. It had not banished her restlessness; Havana was as stale as New York. She remembered with regret how different it had been on her first visit.

Grahame and his companion had been with her then, and she knew that she missed them.

She turned as a man came out on the balcony that ran along the end of the house. He did not look like a Cuban, and she started when the moonlight fell upon him, for she saw that it was Grahame. He was making for the stairs at the corner where the two balconies joined and did not notice her. Evelyn realized that, as she wore a white dress, her figure would be indistinct against the wall, and, if she did not move in the next few moments, he would go down the stairs and disappear among the people in the *patio*. If he had meant to enter the hotel, he would not have come that way.

She felt that if she let him go they might not meet again. After all, this might be wiser. Yet her heart beat fast, and she thrilled with a strange excitement as she stood irresolute, knowing that the choice she had to make would be momentous.

Grahame reached the top of the stairs without turning, and was going down when she leaned over the balustrade. She did not consciously decide upon the action; it was as if something had driven her into making it.

"Mr. Grahame!" she called softly.

He looked up with the moonlight on his face and she saw the gleam she had expected in his eyes. Then he came swiftly toward her, and her indecision vanished when she gave him her hand.

"This is a remarkably pleasant surprise, but I didn't see you until you spoke," he said. "Have you just come out of one of the rooms?"

"No; I've been here some time. I saw you as soon as you appeared on the balcony."

Grahame gave her a quick look, and she knew he was wondering why she had waited until the last moment. He was shrewd enough to see that the delay had some significance, but this did not matter.

"Well," he said, "I'm glad you didn't let me pass, because I was going out into the street, and it's doubtful if I'd have come back."

"Yes," said Evelyn; "I seemed to know that."

He was silent for a moment, but his expression was intent and a faint glow of color showed in his brown face. Evelyn let him make what he liked of her admission. She had not been influenced by coquetry, but by a feeling that it was a time for candor.

"I was thinking about an interview I'd just finished—that is why I didn't look round," he explained. "I came from Matanzas this afternoon."

"Then the *Enchantress* isn't here?"

"No; she's at Matanzas, but I can't get back tonight. Will you be here long?"

"A day or two, waiting for a boat. I wonder whether you would stay and dine with us this evening?" Then a thought struck Evelyn, and she added: "That is, if it isn't undesirable for you to be seen here."

She had not expected him to hesitate and was prepared for his reckless twinkle.

"Of course I'll stay! But did you mean—if it was not unsafe?"

"I suppose I did," she admitted with a smile. "You know I helped you in a mysterious plot the last time

I was here. Now it would be selfish of me to ask you to wait if you think you'd better not."

"There's no risk worth counting, and I'd take it if there was. When you have a temperament like mine it's hard to deny yourself a pleasure."

"I shouldn't have thought you self-indulgent," Evelyn smiled.

"Well," he said, "one's fortitude has its limits. I suppose it depends upon the strength of the temptation."

He had answered in a light vein, and Evelyn followed his lead.

"It's a relief to know you mean to stay. My father will be pleased to see you; but he may not have finished his business when dinner is ready, and I rather shrink from going down alone."

They talked about matters of no importance for a time, and then went through the *patio* to the dining-room. It was not full, and Evelyn imagined that Grahame was glad there were several unoccupied chairs between them and the rest of the company. She noticed, moreover, that when people came in he glanced up quietly, as if he did not want her to notice his action, and she had a guilty feeling that she had made him take a risk that was greater than he would own. Yet she was glad that he had taken it.

"Where are you going when you leave Havana?" he asked presently.

"To Valverde, and afterward perhaps to Rio Frio."

Grahame looked thoughtful, and Evelyn quietly studied him. Her training had made her quick at guessing what lay behind the reserve of people who

were not quite frank with her, and she saw that he was disturbed.

"Why should I not go there?" she asked.

"I don't know any good reason if your father's willing to take you, but the country's in a rather unsettled state just now." Grahame paused for a moment and added earnestly: "Don't trust Gomez."

"Do you think we shall meet him?"

"Yes," he said with a dry smile; "I think it very likely."

"Then you must know something about my father's business, and what is going on in the country."

"I believe I know more about the country than your father does. In fact, I'd like to warn him against Gomez, only that I imagine he's a good judge of character and already knows his man."

Grahame wrote an address on a leaf of a small notebook and, tearing it out, put it on her plate.

"I'm going to ask a favor. If you should meet with any difficulty at Rio Frio, will you send me a message through the man whose name I've written down? I might, perhaps, be of some use."

"Do you expect us to get into any difficulty?"

"No; but one can't tell—trouble might arise."

"And, if it did, you could help us?"

"Well," he said gravely, "I'd do my best."

Evelyn's eyes sparkled.

"I know you could be trusted! But all this mystery gives the trip an extra interest. Then, you have made it obvious that the *Enchantress* will be on the coast."

"May I hope that this adds to your satisfaction?" Grahame said, smiling.

"Now you're frivolous, and I was pleasantly ex-

cited! However, I'll promise that if anything very alarming seems to threaten us I'll send you word."

Grahame looked up. An elderly Cuban gentleman, three or four places off, had once or twice glanced at them carelessly and then resumed his conversation with a lady beside him, but Grahame noticed that he stopped when Evelyn spoke.

"Am I to tell my father what I have promised?" she asked.

"You must use your own judgment about that."

Evelyn understood him. He would not ask her to keep a secret from her father, and she liked his delicacy; but he looked thoughtful. She did not know that the Cuban gentleman engaged his attention.

"Well," she said, "I'll tell him if it seems necessary; that is, if there's any reason for sending you word. Otherwise, of course, there would be no need to mention it."

"No," he agreed with a smile that seemed to draw them closer because it hinted at mutual understanding.

"One doesn't feel forced to explain things to you," Evelyn said impulsively.

"That's an advantage. Explanations are a nuisance, and sometimes dangerous when they're important. I find them easiest when they don't matter."

Cliffe came in and greeted Grahame cordially; and Grahame, glancing down the table without turning his head, saw the Cuban studying them. Something in the man's manner suggested that Cliffe's friendliness had surprised him. He made a few hasty pencil marks on the back of an old letter and then, looking up suddenly, caught Grahame watching him curiously. The Cuban pushed back his chair and left the room, al-

though Grahame suspected that his dinner was not more than half finished.

Evelyn, surprising the alert look on Grahame's face, was now more disturbed than ever on his account. Evidently there was danger for him here.

Her fears would have been increased had she known the few words the spy wrote on his envelope.

CHAPTER XX

THE ARREST OF CASTILLO

ON a hot evening not long after he left Havana, Cliffe sat in a room of the old Spanish *presidio* at Valverde. The building was in harmony with the decayed town, for it had been begun in more prosperous times, and its lower courses were solidly laid with stone. Molded doors and windows spoke of vanished art, and the gallery round the central *patio* was raised on finely carved pillars, but Valverde had fallen on evil days and the *presidio* had been finished with adobe mud. It had served at different times as the seat of the government, the barracks, and the jail, and now, when part had fallen down, the rest had been rudely repaired, and Gomez was quartered there when he visited the port.

Outside, the ruinous building still retained a certain dignity, but this was not so within, where degenerate taste was shown in the tawdry decoration, and Gomez's sitting-room frankly offended Cliffe with its suggestion of effeminate luxury. Gaudy silk hangings hid the old adobe walls, a silver lamp with a smoked chimney hung from the ceiling by tarnished chains, and highly colored rugs were spread upon the dirty floor. There were inartistic but heavily gilded French

clocks and mirrors; and over all a sickening scent of perfume.

Cliffe found it more pleasant to look out through the open window at the town, which lay beneath him, bathed in moonlight. The close-massed, square-fronted houses glimmered white and pink and yellow, with narrow gaps between them where a few lights burned; a break, from which dusky foliage rose, marked the *alameda*. In front ran a curving beach where wet sand glistened below a bank of shingle and a fringe of surf broke with a drowsy roar. Though it was not late, there was no stir in the streets; an air of languorous depression brooded over the town. Gomez seemed to feel that it needed an explanation.

"Our trade," he said, "is prosperous, but we do not encourage the people to gather in the plaza, and the cafés are watched. They are the storm centers: it is there the busybodies talk. The man who stays at home and minds his business is seldom a danger to the State. He dislikes change, and has no time to waste on idealistic theories."

"I guess that's true, up to a point," Cliffe agreed. "The industrious citizen will stand for a good deal, but he's a man to reckon with when things get too bad. He doesn't talk, like the others; he's been trained to act, and there are developments when he makes up his mind about what he wants. However, this is not what we're here to discuss."

"No; but the state of the country has something to do with the matter. We admit that there have been manifestations of discontent, and disturbances caused by mischievous persons who love disorder, and we

must enforce quietness and respect for authority. This, you will understand, costs some money."

"I've subscribed a good deal," Cliffe reminded him. "I'm anxious to learn when I'm going to get it back."

"The wish is natural. May I point out that in generously offering help you threw in your lot with the Government and made our interests yours?"

"I see that pretty clearly," Cliffe replied with a touch of grimness, for he recognized the skill with which he had been led on until he could not draw back without a heavy loss. "Anyway, as you seem to have weathered the storm, I want my reward. In short, I've come to find out when your President means to sign the concessions."

"It will be as soon as possible; there is a small difficulty. We have an elective legislature; an encumbrance, señor, which hampers the administration, but in times of discontent it has some influence. Our people are jealous of foreigners, and there are interested persons ready to work upon their feelings. This is why the President hesitates about granting fresh concessions until he has found a way of silencing his enemies among the representatives. You perceive that I am frank with you."

"It's what I like; but you haven't told me yet what I want to know. Now, unless I can find out exactly when I may expect the papers signed, I'll feel compelled to shut off supplies. I'd rather cut my loss than go on enlarging it."

Gomez looked pained.

"I must remind you, with some diffidence, that others have offered their help," he said.

"They offered it; they haven't paid up. I expect you'll find they'll insist on knowing when you mean to deliver the goods. That's my position; I stand firm on it."

"Very well. Before answering, I must inform the President."

"You needn't. I'm going to take this matter to headquarters."

"Unfortunately, the President has gone to Villa Paz for a short rest. I fear he would not like to be disturbed."

"He will see me; he has to," Cliffe declared.

"After all, it is possible, but I see a difficulty. There is no inn at Villa Paz where the señorita could find accommodation and the President is, like myself, a bachelor. He could receive you, but not the señorita. Our conventions are antiquated, but they must be considered. It is this which prevents me from offering my hospitality."

Cliffe pondered for a few moments. The conventions Gomez mentioned were justified, because women are not treated in his country as they are in the United States, and Cliffe could not leave Evelyn alone in the Valverde Hotel. For all that, he must see the President, and he imagined that although Gomez had made some difficulties the fellow was willing that he should go. Gomez was a clever rogue, but Cliffe thought he could be trusted so long as their interests did not clash.

He looked up sharply, for there was a sudden stir in the town. Cliffe was conscious of no definite sound, but he felt that the quietness had been broken and he saw that Gomez was listening. The man's fleshy face was intent; the stamp of indulgence had gone and

given place to a look of fierce cruelty. He had become alert and resolute; this struck Cliffe as significant, as there was, so far, nothing to cause alarm.

In a few moments a murmur broke out, and swelled while Gomez walked to the open window. The streets were suddenly filled with the patter of hurrying feet, and the confused outcry became a menacing roar. Cliffe jumped up. He had heard something like it when a mob of desperate strikers drove the police through an American manufacturing town; and now his daughter was alone at the hotel.

"What is it?" he asked.

"A tumult," Gomez answered. "I do not think it will be serious. We have placed a guard about the hotel, so the señorita is safe. But you will excuse me for a few minutes."

He went into an adjoining room, and Cliffe, standing by the window, heard a telephone call. After this, all sounds inside the house were drowned by the growing uproar outside. Cliffe could see nothing of the riot, but he thought he could locate it in one of the dark gaps that pierced a block of houses some distance off. The clamor gained in effect from the mystery that surrounded its cause.

Two pistol shots rang out and there was a wild shouting, but the note of fury had changed to alarm. Cliffe thought he could hear men running, and he pictured the mob pouring down the narrow street in flight, for the cries grew less frequent and receded. At last they died away, and a group of men moving in regular order came out of the mouth of a street. They seemed to have a prisoner in their midst, and four peons plodded behind, carrying something on a

shutter. Then they all vanished into the gloom, and when their measured steps were getting faint Gomez returned with an unpleasant smile.

"It is nothing," he said. "We had planned the arrest of a troublesome person called Castillo, who is a favorite with the mob. There was some excitement, and a few stones were thrown, but only one attempt at a rescue, the leader of which was shot by the rural guards. As he was a man we suspected of sedition, this has saved us some trouble."

Cliffe looked at him, as one who might study a new species of animal or some rare and ugly plant.

Gomez spread out his hands.

"It is worth noting that the affair proves our strength," he said gloatingly. "We have seized a popular leader of the discontented, and there was no determined resistance. One may consider it an encouraging sign."

Cliffe nodded agreement, and Gomez changed the subject.

"I have been thinking," he said. "If you are resolved to see the President, Señora Herrero, wife of the *alcalde,* whom you have met, would take care of the señorita while you are away. They are people of some importance, and she would be safe with them."

This struck Cliffe as a good suggestion, and when Gomez accompanied him to the *alcalde's* house the matter was arranged with Evelyn's consent. The next morning Cliffe set off with a relay of mules and three or four days later was received by the President at a little town among the hills. Nothing was said about business until he had rested and dined, and then he sat with his host on a veranda half hidden by bougain-

villea, looking down on the dim littoral that ran back to the sea.

President Altiera differed from his secretary. He looked more of an autocratic soldier than a diplomatist. There was a hint of brutality about him, and Cliffe thought he would rather use force than guile. The man had a coarse, strong face, and his eyes were stern, but he was rather reserved than truculent.

"Señor," he said, "since I understand you were determined to see me, it is an honor to welcome you, and my house and self are at your command. I imagine, however, that neither of us often wastes much time on compliments."

"My excuse is that I find one does best by going to headquarters when any difficulties arise. It seemed possible that your secretary might smooth down my remarks before transmitting them."

"And you do not wish them smoothed down," Altiera dryly suggested.

"I think it best that we should understand each other."

"That is so. What do you wish to understand?"

"When I may expect the sealed grant of the concessions."

"In two months, provided that my enemies do not kill me first, which I think is hardly probable."

"One hopes not, but there is another risk; not large, perhaps, but to be reckoned with."

Altiera laughed.

"That the people may choose another President? No, señor. I rule this country. When I cease to do so it will be because I am dead. Let us be candid. Your concessions depend upon the luck that may at-

tend some assassin's attempt, and I take precautions."

Cliffe thought this was true. Altiera carried a pistol, and could use it remarkably well, and two armed guards were posted outside the veranda.

"There is a condition," Altiera said. "The concessions will be yours in two months, but payment of the money my secretary asked for must be made in a fortnight, or, if this is impossible, as soon as you get home."

"It would suit me better to take the concessions in a fortnight and pay in two months," Cliffe retorted coolly.

"I am not a trader, señor; I do not dispute and haggle over a bargain."

"Neither do I," said Cliffe. "Still, it's necessary for a trader to state his terms."

There was silence for a few moments, and Cliffe, studying his antagonist's face, thought his statement justified. The man might use brutal means to gain his end, but he would not contend about a small advantage.

"Very well," the President conceded. "Though it will cause me some embarrassment, I make another offer. You shall have the grant in a month."

"A month is too long to wait."

Altiera rose and stood with his brown hand clenched upon the back of his chair and his brows knitted. It seemed to cost him an effort to maintain his self-control, and Cliffe saw that he had pressed him hard. For all that, he did not mean to yield. He had gone farther than was prudent, and knew when to stop.

"You understand what you risk by your exactions?" Altiera asked menacingly.

"Señor Gomez made that plain. I have no security for the money already paid, except your honor."

Altiera bowed.

"Though the situation is difficult and you make it worse, I believe your confidence is not misplaced. Well, since one or two of my ministers must be consulted, I cannot give you an answer for a week; but the country is healthful in this neighborhood, and you may be interested in studying its resources. My house is at your disposal, and your comfort will be provided for while I see what can be doné."

It took Cliffe a minute or two to make up his mind. He would rather have gone back to Valverde at once; but he felt that he must finish his business before returning. Although he had some misgivings, he agreed to stay.

In reaching his decision he thought Evelyn safe with the *alcalde;* but he had not reckoned on the cunning of Secretary Gomez.

CHAPTER XXI

A HALF-BREED'S TRICK

EVELYN found the time pass heavily at Valverde. The town was hot and uninteresting, although she did not see much of it, for it was only when the glaring sunshine had faded off the narrow streets that she was allowed a leisurely stroll in company with the *alcalde's* wife. Señora Herrero, who was stout and placid, and always dressed in black, spoke no English, and only a few words of French. After an hour's superintendence of her half-breed servants' work, she spent most of the day in sleep. Yet she was careful of her guest's comfort, and in this respect Evelyn had no cause for complaint.

It was the monotony the girl found trying. After the ten o'clock breakfast there was nothing to be done until dinner was served at four. The adobe house was very quiet and was darkened by lattices pulled across the narrow windows; and there was no stir in the town between noon and early evening. Evelyn patiently tried to grasp the plot of a Spanish novel, and when she got tired of this sat in the coolest spot she could find, listening to the drowsy rumble of the surf. Hitherto her time had been occupied by strenuous amusements, and the lethargic inaction jarred.

It was better when the shadows lengthened, because

there were then voices and footsteps in the streets. One could watch the languid traffic; but when night came Valverde, instead of wakening to a few hours' joyous life, was silent again. Sometimes a group of people went by laughing, and now and then a few gathered round a singer with a guitar, but there was no noisy talk in the cafés and no band played in the *alameda*. An ominous quietness brooded over the town.

All this reacted on Evelyn's nerves, and one hot afternoon she felt ready to welcome any change as she sat in a shaded room. Her hands were wet with perspiration, the flies that buzzed about her face exasperated her, and she found the musky smell that filled the house intolerable. Señora Herrero lay in a big cane chair, looking strangely bulky and shapeless in her tight black dress, with her eyes half closed and no sign of intelligence in her heavily powdered face. Evelyn longed to wake her and make her talk.

Then there were steps outside and Gomez came in. He bowed, and Señora Herrero grew suddenly alert. Indeed, it struck Evelyn that her hostess felt disturbed, but she paid no attention to this. She was glad of a break in the monotony, and it was not until afterward her mind dwelt upon what took place.

"Señor Cliffe's business with the President will keep him longer than he thought. He may be detained for a fortnight," Gomez said.

Evelyn had no reason for being on her guard, and her disappointment was obvious.

"I was looking forward to his return in a day or two," she answered.

"The señor Cliffe is to be envied for having a duti-

ful daughter," Gomez smiled. "Still, I need not offer my sympathy, because it is his wish that you should go to him."

"When?" Evelyn asked eagerly.

"As soon as you are ready. I have ordered the mules, and you can bring what you think needful. We could start after dinner, and I offer myself as escort for part of the way."

"But this is impossible!" Señora Herrero exclaimed in horrified protest.

Gomez spread out his hands deprecatingly.

"With apologies, señora, I think not. My plan is that you should go with your guest until I can place her in some other lady's hands."

"But it is years since I have ridden a mule, and exercise makes me ill! Besides, I cannot leave my husband and my household."

Evelyn remembered afterward that her hostess's indignant expression suddenly changed, as if Gomez had given her a warning look; but he answered good-humoredly:

"I have seen Don José. He feels desolated at the thought of losing you for two or three days, but he agrees that we must do all we can to suit the wishes of our American friends. Besides, you can travel to Galdo, where we stay the night, in a coach. I will see that one is sent, but it may take an hour or two to find mules."

"They must be good," said the señora. "I am heavy, and the road is bad."

"We will pick the best; but until you overtake us the señorita Cliffe will, no doubt, be satisfied with my escort. We should reach Galdo soon after dark. The

señora Romanez will receive us there, and we start early the next morning on our journey to the hills."

Gomez turned to Evelyn.

"This meets with your approval?" he asked suavely.

"Oh, yes," she agreed; though she afterward realized that there was no obvious reason why she should not have waited for the coach, and that it was curious her hostess did not suggest this.

Gomez returned after dinner before Evelyn was quite ready, and she was somewhat surprised that he made no remark about the luggage she wished to take. It was skilfully lashed on the broad pack-saddles, and they set off when she mounted a handsome mule. There were two baggage animals, driven by dark-skinned peons, and two mounted men brought up the rear. Gomez said this explained the delay in getting mules for the coach, but added that the girl would find the journey pleasanter in the saddle.

Evelyn agreed with him as they rode down the roughly paved street. It was a relief to be moving, and the air had got pleasantly cool. Half-breed women with black shawls round their heads looked up at her from beside their tiny charcoal cooking fires, and she saw dark eyes flash with hostility as her escort passed. Here and there a woman of pure Spanish blood stood on a balcony and glanced down with shocked prudery at the bold American, but Evelyn smiled at this. She distrusted Gomez, who obviously was not a favorite with the poorer citizens, but as a traveling companion she did not find much fault with him.

After a while they left the houses behind and turned into a dusty, rutted track. The murmur of the sea

followed them until they reached a belt of forest where the sound was cut off, and Evelyn felt as if she had lost a friend. The measured beat of the surf and the gleam of spray were familiar things; the forest was mysterious, and oppressively silent. In places a red glow shone among the massive trunks, but, for the most part, they were hung with creepers and all below was wrapped in shade. The track grew soft and wet; the air was steamy and filled with exotic smells. Evelyn felt her skin get damp, and the mules fell into a labored pace.

Strange noises began to fill the gathering gloom; the air throbbed with a humming that rose and fell. Deep undertones and shrill pipings that it was hard to believe were made by frogs and insects pierced the stagnant air. Specks of phosphorescent light twinkled among the leaves, but the fireflies were familiar and Evelyn welcomed them. She felt suddenly homesick, and wished they were not leaving the coast; but she remembered that her father had sent for her, and brushed her uneasiness away.

After a time, Gomez stopped.

"We have not gone fast, and the señora ought to overtake us soon," he said. "Will you get down and wait for her?"

The forest, with the thin mist drifting through it, had a forbidding look, and, for the first time that she could recollect, Evelyn felt afraid of the dark.

"Let us go on," she said.

Gomez hesitated a moment and then acquiesced.

The road got steep and the mist thicker. Drooping creepers brushed them as they passed, and now and then Evelyn was struck by a projecting branch.

Her mule, however, needed no guidance, and she sank into a dreamy lethargy. There was something enervating and soporific in the steamy atmosphere.

At last the gloom began to lighten and they came out into the luminous clearness of the tropic night. In front lay a few flat blocks of houses, surrounded by fields of cane, and here and there a patch of broad-leafed bananas. Passing through the silent village they reached a long building which Gomez said was the Romanez *hacienda*.

Lights gleamed in the windows, but they knocked twice before a strong, arched door was unfastened, and they rode through into the *patio*. It was obvious that they were expected. A gentleman dressed in white, his stout wife in black, and a girl who wore a thin, yellow dress, came down to welcome them. They were hospitable, but Evelyn, speaking only a few words of Castilian, and feeling very tired, was glad when her hostess showed her to her room.

She soon went to sleep, and, wakening early, felt invigorated by the cool air that flowed in through the open window and the sight of the blue hills that rose, clean-cut, against the morning sky. Then she had a drowsy recollection of something being wrong, and presently remembered that the señora Herrero had not arrived. This, however, was not important, because Gomez could no doubt arrange for her hostess to accompany them on the next stage of their journey.

Evelyn found Gomez apologetic when they met at breakfast. He was much vexed with the *alcalde's* wife, but the señorita Romanez and her duenna would take her place, and he expected to put Evelyn in her father's care in two more days. This, he added, would

afford him a satisfaction that would be tempered by regret.

They started after breakfast, but Evelyn did not feel drawn to her new companion. Luisa Romanez was handsome in a voluptuous style, with dark hair, a powdered face, and languishing black eyes, but so far as she could make her meaning clear, she banteringly complimented Evelyn on having won the admiration of a distinguished man. Evelyn declared that this was a mistake, and Gomez had offered his escort as a duty, to which Doña Luisa returned a mocking smile. Her amusement annoyed Evelyn. On the whole, she was glad that conversation was difficult. The sour, elderly duenna who rode behind them said nothing at all.

After traveling all day, they stopped at a lonely *hacienda,* where Evelyn soon retired to rest. She slept well, and, wakening rather late the next morning, found that Doña Luisa and her duenna had left an hour before. This was embarrassing, because Evelyn knew something about Spanish conventions; but, after all, she was an American, and they did not apply to her.

Gomez appeared annoyed and extremely apologetic.

"There has been a misunderstanding," he explained. "I thought the señorita Romanez would go with us to Rio Frio, but she told me last night that she must return early this morning. I expostulated and implored, but the señorita was firm. She declared she had not promised to come farther than the *hacienda.* You see my unfortunate position. One cannot compel a lady to do what she does not wish."

"When shall we reach Rio Frio?" Evelyn asked.

"If all goes well, late this afternoon."

Evelyn thought for a moment. She was vexed and vaguely alarmed, but her father was waiting for her at Rio Frio.

"Then let us start as soon as possible," she said.

Gomez bowed.

"When breakfast is over. I go to give my men their orders."

Leaving the *hacienda,* they rode by rough, steep tracks that wound through belts of forest and crossed sun-scorched slopes. Although it was hot, the air was clear, and Evelyn was pleased to see that Gomez kept the mules at a steady pace. At noon they reached a cluster of poverty-stricken mud houses, and Gomez called one of the ragged, half-breed peons. They talked for some time in a low voice, and then Gomez turned to Evelyn.

"I am afraid we shall have to wait here for two or three hours," he said. "It might be dangerous to go any farther now."

"But I must get on!" Evelyn answered sharply.

"Your wishes would be a command, only that I must think of your safety first. There is an inn in the village, and while you rest I will explain why we cannot go forward."

Evelyn found the small *fonda* indescribably dirty, but it offered shelter from the sun. Openings in its bare walls let in puffs of breeze, and decaying lattices kept out the glare, but the room was full of flies, and rustling sounds showed that other insects lurked in the crevices. The place reeked with the smell of *caña* and kerosene, and Evelyn had to force herself to eat a little of the greasy mess that was set before her in rude,

sun-baked crockery. When the meal was over Gomez began his explanation.

"You have heard that the country is disturbed. There are turbulent people who want a revolution, and I am not popular with them."

Evelyn smiled, for she had learned something about the country's politics and she thought he had expressed the feeling of its discontented citizens very mildly. She distrusted him, but, so far, his conduct had been irreproachable.

"I see you understand," he resumed. "The worst is that you too are an object of suspicion; it is known that your father is a friend of the President and has business with him. Well, I have been warned that some of our enemies are in the neighborhood, and they might rouse the peons to attack us. They will know when we left the *hacienda* and watch for us, but we can outwit them by waiting a while and then taking another road."

This was plausible, and Evelyn agreed to the delay, although she did not feel quite satisfied when Gomez left her. The dirty room was very hot and its atmosphere unspeakably foul, but she could not sit outside in the sun, and, taking up a soiled newspaper, she tried to read. Her knowledge of Castilian did not carry her far, but she made out that the Government was being urged to deal severely with a man named Sarmiento.

Evelyn put down the paper, feeling that she ought to know the name. Sarmiento had some connection with Grahame and his friends; perhaps they had spoken of him. This led her to think of them. It looked as if Grahame were interested in the country's

politics. Remembering the promise she had made, she wondered whether the *Enchantress* was then on the coast. As he seemed to be opposing Gomez, he must be helping the revolutionaries, while her father had business with the President. This was puzzling, and she sat thinking about it for some time; and then looked up with a start as Gomez came in.

"So you have been reading the *diario!*" he remarked.

"I don't understand very much; but who is Don Martin Sarmiento?"

"A dangerous person who goes about making trouble."

"It's curious, but I think I have met him."

Gomez gave her a searching glance and then smiled.

"He is not worth remembering, but you did meet him at Havana."

"Ah!" said Evelyn sharply.

Gomez laughed.

"Must I remind you, señorita, of a little affair at the Hotel International?"

Evelyn remembered it well and guessed that it was Sarmiento whom Gomez had been pursuing when she stopped him by dropping her ring. She could now understand his look of baffled rage, and she recalled her shrinking from the savagery it displayed.

"One imagines that you did not know Don Martin," Gomez said lightly, although there was a keen look in his narrowed eyes.

"No," Evelyn answered; "I only saw him at dinner."

"Then perhaps you have heard your father speak of him?"

"I am not sure; I have heard his name somewhere; but I don't think my father ever met him."

"Well, I don't know that it is of much importance. I came to tell you that I think we can start."

They set off and reached Rio Frio without trouble some time after dark. People in the streets turned and gazed at them, and although some saluted Gomez, Evelyn thought that, for the most part, they watched the party with unfriendly curiosity. She was eager to meet her father, but when they dismounted in the *patio* of a large white house she got a shock. A dark-skinned woman and several half-breed servants came down from a gallery to welcome them, but Cliffe was not there.

CHAPTER XXII

HELD FOR RANSOM

GOMEZ once more apologized. The señor Cliffe had not yet arrived from Villa Paz, he explained, but was expected in the morning. In the meantime the good señora Garcia would look after the señorita's comfort.

Evelyn had to be content with that. Indeed, she was too tired to feel much disturbed. On getting up the next morning, however, she was troubled by unpleasant suspicions. It had been a shock to find Cliffe absent, and she began to review the misadventures which had marked her journey. To begin with, it now seemed curious that her father had not written instead of sending a message; then, the señora Herrero had not kept her promise to overtake them, and Luisa Romanez had unexpectedly gone back. While she wondered whether all this had any sinister meaning, Evelyn felt for a packet of paper currency which she had, at her father's advice, sewn into her dress. She found that it was gone. A hurried search showed that the stitches had been neatly cut.

For a few moments she felt unnerved, and then resolutely pulled herself together. This was no time for hysteria. It was obvious that she had been duped. The lost sum was not large, but with the exception of

a few coins it was all she had, and it had not been stolen by a common thief. Somebody had searched her clothes while she slept and taken the money with the object of embarrassing her.

Going to the window, she looked out at the town. It had a mean, dilapidated air; the few inhabitants she saw slowly moving about looked poverty-stricken and furtive. Their harsh voices jarred; one could expect no sympathy or help from these foreigners. Hitherto she had been indulged and carefully protected, but she was now alone and in danger, and the novel experience was daunting. Still, she saw that it was unwise to give her imagination rein. She must keep her head and try to grapple with the situation.

She finished dressing and without waiting for the morning chocolate found her way to the room in which she had been received on the previous evening. It stretched across one end of the house on the second floor and was furnished in rather barbarous taste. Although there was a profusion of colored silk and a hint of sensual luxury, it was obviously a man's room, and Evelyn studied the woman who joined her when the majordomo brought in breakfast.

Señora Garcia was coarsely handsome, but she had not the easy manners of a lady of rank and her dark color hinted at Indian blood. Her expression was arrogant, and Evelyn felt that she was hostile. Besides, she spoke an uncouth Spanish that the girl could not understand at all. Breakfast was a trial of nerve, but Evelyn knew that she must eat and hide her fears. When breakfast was over she would have a talk with Gomez.

He soon came in, and dismissed the señora Garcia

with a commanding glance. Her servile obedience was significant.

"*Buenos días, señorita,*" he greeted Evelyn smilingly.

"When do you expect my father?" she asked bluntly.

"I regret that I cannot answer positively. It may be a week before he comes—perhaps longer."

"But you brought me here to meet him!"

Gomez smiled, and spread out his hands in a way that always irritated Evelyn.

"It now appears that the señor Cliffe's business with the President is not finished," he said.

"It would not prevent his coming to meet me if he had promised."

"You should know best," Gomez answered with a shrug. "Still, it looks as if the señor Cliffe put his business first and is not very anxious about you."

"That is not true!" Evelyn said vehemently. "If he had any cause to be anxious, he would let no business stand in the way!"

"Ah! I admit I find this interesting."

Gomez looked so satisfied that Evelyn feared she had blundered, though she could not see how. Her heart beat fast and her nerves were tensely strung, but she knew that she must be calm. The man was her antagonist and she was fighting in the dark.

"Well," she said, "since my father has not arrived, I will go to him."

"I am afraid that is impossible. It is a long way to Villa Paz and the country is disturbed."

"Do you mean to prevent my going?"

"Far from it, señorita. You are at liberty to do what you wish; but unfortunately, I cannot provide

mules and an escort. There are some dangerous revolutionaries among the hills. Then, I must remind you that our people dislike foreigners, and a lady cannot travel alone and without money."

Evelyn felt trapped.

"How do you *know* I haven't money? Because it was stolen in this house! You must lend me some—my father will repay it."

"Your pardon, señorita, but you are mistaken; I can answer for the honesty of my servants. I would lend you money, only that I cannot permit you to make a journey I know is dangerous."

The girl sat still and there was silence for a few moments while she tried to brace herself. She felt that she was at the man's mercy, for there was something threatening behind his suave politeness, and his smile indicated that he was amused by her futile struggles. For all that, she must keep up the fight.

"Then what is to be done?" she asked.

"I suggest that you write to the señor Cliffe and tell him where you are. If you add that you do not feel safe, he will, no doubt, join you as soon as possible. Although it may reflect upon our care of you, we will see that he gets the letter."

It seemed a simple course, but Evelyn was on her guard. She must match her wits against the man's, and he had shown a hint of eagerness that she thought suspicious. Having brought her to Rio Frio by trickery, why did he wish her father to know that she felt alarmed?

"I should be glad to write to him, but I do not see why I should make him uneasy on my account," she said.

There was something in Gomez's expression which indicated that he felt baffled, and she knew it might be dangerous to provoke him; but he exercised self-control.

"That is for you to judge, but are you not inconsistent, señorita? You show some anger and alarm when you do not find your father here, and now when I suggest an easy way of bringing him, you will not take it."

"Do you want him to come here?" Evelyn asked bluntly.

Gomez gave her a steady, thoughtful look.

"On the whole, that would suit us." He paused and added in a meaning tone: "It would facilitate your return to the coast."

Evelyn knew she had been given a hint that was half a threat and it cost her something to refuse it, although she felt that to do what the man wished might not be the safest plan.

"After all, it might interfere with his business if I made him leave Villa Paz before he is ready."

Watching Gomez closely she thought his calm was forced, but he bowed.

"As you wish, señorita, but you will think over it. And now I must leave you."

For some minutes after he had gone Evelyn sat with relaxed muscles and vacant mind, for the strain had told; then by degrees her courage came back. She was an American and must show no weakness to an antagonist of alien and, she felt, baser blood. Besides, it looked as if she had won the first encounter and she had resources which should prove useful. She had inherited her father's intelligence, and her social

training had given her restraint and the power to conceal her thoughts, while a woman's quick, instinctive perception was an advantage.

All this, however, was not directly to the point. She had been decoyed to Rio Frio for some purpose. She shrank as she remembered Luisa Romanez's hints; still, she did not think Gomez was in love with her. The fellow was a sensualist, but he had some advantage in view, and she had already suspected what it was. Now she began to understand the matter more clearly. Gomez and the President meant to use her as a means of getting her father into their power. She did not think his personal safety was threatened, but they would insist on his agreeing to their terms as the price of restoring her to him, and it was plain that she would play into their hands by writing a letter that would cause him anxiety. Evelyn determined that they should not have her help, but although she sat for some time with brows knitted and hands clenched, she could make no better plan than to remain quietly obstinate.

It was impossible to reach Villa Paz without money, and although she shrank from being left in the power of a man like Gomez, she thought his self-interest would secure her safety. She might, perhaps, get some one to carry a message to Grahame if he were on the coast, but she was reluctant to do so unless the need were urgent.

After a while she got up and went out into the plaza. People gazed at her curiously; some smiled at one another as she passed, and a number of the women looked suspicious and hostile. For all that, she was neither molested nor followed, and when the sun got hot she

returned to the house, where she spent the day drearily improving her knowledge of Castilian. It promised to become useful, but the fine language jarred her long afterward.

The week that followed tried her courage. She was, in reality, a prisoner, though subject to no open restraint and treated well, except that the señora Garcia regarded her with badly disguised hatred. Now and then she saw Gomez, but he was suavely courteous and said nothing of importance. She got nervous and lost her color and her appetite, but there was nothing to do but wait until Gomez, who apparently meant to wear her out, made some fresh demand.

One evening he came into the room where she sat and after a ceremonious greeting stood with his head slightly bent in an attitude of respect. He was dressed in a white uniform which emphasized his stoutness and the dark color of his greasy skin.

"You look tired, señorita," he remarked.

"I am very tired of Rio Frio. Have you come to tell me that I can go away?"

"That you should be eager to do so grieves me, but I can, perhaps, make it possible. There is a proposal I wish to make."

"Yes?" Evelyn answered as carelessly as she could.

"You may find what I propose surprising; but I must beg you to think over it and you will see that it is not so strange as it seems. I have the honor to ask you to be my wife."

Evelyn shrank back in horror, as if he had struck her, and then with an effort recovered her self-control.

"This is impossible, señor; indeed, it is absurd."

"Your pardon," he said with ominous grimness; "I

cannot agree. It is, I think, the best way out of an embarrassing situation, but this is an argument I do not wish to use. I would rather speak of the charm you exercise and my respectful admiration."

"We can leave that out. I do not value nor desire it."

The man's dark eyes flashed, and Evelyn knew the danger of rousing him. His Spanish polish was only skin-deep, and the savage lurked beneath. For all that, she was desperate and meant to force the conflict.

"Very well," he said; "I must take another course. To begin with, it looks as if your father did not care what became of you. It is now some time since he left you at Valverde and he has not troubled to inquire if you are safe."

"I do not believe that!"

"Well, we will let it go. The rest is more important. It is known in Valverde that you did me the honor to run away with me."

Evelyn jumped up, with the color rushing to her face and her hands clenched. The prudence she tried to exercise had given place to imperious anger.

"You scoundrel!" she cried. "Do you think it matters to me what your black-blooded countrymen and women think! Your Moorish customs may be necessary for them, but I am an American!"

Gomez chuckled.

"There were two American *comisionistas* at Valverde and they must have heard the story in the cafés. It is, you understand, a romantic episode: the daughter of a well-known financier elopes with a foreign soldier. The *comisionistas* talk about it when they return and your newspapers make the most of the tale. Some

of them are not reserved or fastidious. It is possible they print your portrait. One can imagine the astonishment of your friends, but the story would be incomplete if it did not end with a romantic wedding."

The girl drew back in horror. If the tale reached home, the shock would break her mother down; but it was possible that Gomez was lying. She had heard of no American drummers in the town.

He gave her no time to recover.

"Then I must show you how what followed our flight from Valverde fits in. We arrive together at Rio Frio after dark; you find shelter in my house."

Evelyn started, for this was worse.

"Your house!" she exclaimed. "Then who is Señora Garcia?"

Gomez smirked in an ugly manner.

"A woman of the town who comes at my bidding."

The jealous hatred of the coarse but handsome woman was now explained and Evelyn grew hot with humiliation as she saw that the señora Garcia regarded her as a favored rival. It was unendurable; but in spite of her anger she was getting calm. Besides, there was some hope in the thought that Gomez could not be moved by passion. He was a sensual brute, and her beauty had perhaps caught his roving eye, but it was some material advantage he sought.

"It was a clever plot; one that only a mind like yours could conceive," she said with quiet scorn.

"The important thing is that it succeeded. But may I ask why you object to me? I am a man of influence —in reality, the second in power. The country is disturbed and discontented; before long I may be first."

"Your hopes would probably come to a sudden end,

if your master guessed them," Evelyn answered with a mocking smile.

She saw that she had touched him, for he cast a quick glance at the door, as if to make sure that nobody had heard his boast. As he did so, Evelyn thought she heard a faint movement outside, but she knew she might be mistaken, and Gomez did not seem to notice anything. To distract his attention, she flung another jibe at him.

"Señor," she said, "though you think I am in your power, I will never marry you. It is an insult to suggest it. Even if you were not repulsive in person and character, you are not a white man."

The blood rushed to his face and his eyes flashed.

"You are rash, señorita, in trying to provoke me, but you may take a wiser course before I have finished with you. It pains me deeply to be compelled to remind you that you are in my house, in my power. I repeat to you my offer, señorita; I give you one more chance to marry me *of your own free will.* And now I leave you to think it over."

Before Evelyn could more than gasp he was gone. She fell limply into a chair and dropped her head into her hands. She must think, *think;* but the strain had been unbearable and the reaction threatened to overwhelm her.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE INTERCEPTED NOTE

WHEN she was able to think calmly, Evelyn found herself confronted by familiar troubles. She was not a prisoner and yet she could not run away, because she had no money and could not understand the barbarous Castilian spoken among the hills. Moreover, she could not appeal, even by signs, for help, for it was generally believed that she had eloped with Gomez. His friends would, no doubt, send her back to him. His enemies would treat her with rude contempt. Sooner than be forced to marry him, she would steal away and starve; but she had a conviction that things would not come to the worst. It would suit Gomez best to break down her resistance by moral pressure.

She was young, but not altogether inexperienced, and during the past week her mental powers had suddenly developed; besides, she was supported by a deep-rooted national pride. It was a privilege to be an American, or, as her countrymen sometimes expressed it, to be white. The sentiment might not be quite free from prejudice, but it was founded on truth and carried an obligation. One must respect one's birthright and never submit to be trampled on by a foreigner.

It was, however, obvious that she must seek outside help, and in her need she thought of Grahame. He would come if she sent for him, and she knew now that he would be welcome if he came as her lover. He was a white man; it was an unspeakable relief to dwell upon his fine, athletic symmetry and his strong, brown face with its stamp of semi-ascetic restraint, after the tainted grossness of her persecutor. She had thought of him often, and had indeed found it hard not to do so oftener, but the turning-point had come and, flinging aside ambition, she opened her heart to the love that had been waiting. This was not because she was in danger, although danger had hastened the crisis.

For a time she forgot Gomez, and listened vacantly to the patter of feet in the hot streets while she sat quietly in a corner of the shaded room, lost in alluring dreams. Then she roused herself, and going to her apartment wrote a short message, stating that she needed help. She could not find an envelope and dare not ask for one, so she folded the note and wrote across it the address Grahame had given her. Then she stole from the house.

No one interfered with her as she went up a street that led to the outskirts of the town, where she was less likely to be watched. The unsealed note could not be posted, because it would no doubt be given to Gomez, but she might find somebody who would arrange for its conveyance by hand. It would be better if the person were a revolutionary, but she imagined that the President's enemies would not make themselves conspicuous. Some risk must be taken, but, after all, very few people could read English.

After a time she met a peon and showed him the note. He seemed surprised to see the Spanish name on the back, and at first vigorously shook his head, but when Evelyn held out two or three coins he began to ponder, and presently made a sign of understanding and took the note. Evelyn felt reckless as he moved away, for she had given him all her money and had no resource left.

Returning by a different way, she entered the house. Gomez did not seem to be about, but the building was large and she seldom saw him except when he paid her a formal visit. The man was a ruffian, but it was her money he wanted, and he would act discreetly. His boast had thrown some light upon his treacherous schemes: he meant to make himself President, if he could compel her father to provide the necessary funds.

The peon carrying the note set out on foot for the next village, where he had a friend who sometimes went to the coast. The friend, however, was not at home, and Evelyn's messenger, being tired and in possession of more money than usual, entered a little wine-shop and ordered refreshment. The *caña* was strong and after drinking more than was good for him he forgot his caution when one of the villagers asked what had brought him there. To satisfy the fellow's curiosity, he produced the note, and the loungers in the wine-shop grew interested, for the man to whom it was addressed was known as an enemy of the Government.

One tried to take it from the peon, another interfered, and as both political parties were represented, a tumult broke out. It was stopped by the arrival of two rural guards, the note was seized, and one of the

guards set off for Rio Frio at dawn the next morning.

Gomez started when he was given the note, for Evelyn had made an unexpected move; but he saw the importance of what it implied and lighted a cigarette while he thought the matter out. He had suspected the *Enchantress* for some time and knew that Grahame was her owner. Since the *yanqui* was in communication with a dangerous revolutionist, he must be engaged in smuggling arms, and if he had landed many, the rebels would be ready to fight. For all that, Gomez was puzzled. Grahame was a friend of the señorita Cliffe's—perhaps even her lover—and he was helping the rebels, while her father had spent a good deal of money to support the President. This suggested that Cliffe might be playing a crooked game, and bore out some suspicions Gomez had entertained. The President must be informed at once; but in the meantime Gomez saw how the note could be made use of.

After some thought, he summoned a confidential clerk who had learned English in the United States, and gave him the note.

"It seems that the señorita does not like Rio Frio and means to leave us," he remarked.

The clerk discreetly contented himself with a sign of agreement.

"Well," Gomez resumed, "I think we will let her message go."

"Would that be wise?" the other ventured. "We do not know when and which way the Englishman will come, and he may be joined by some of Sarmiento's followers."

Gomez smiled.

"The señorita Cliffe is artless and has made a mistake. Her note covers only half the paper and leaves room for something to be added underneath."

"Ah!" The clerk was a skillful penman and had once or twice successfully imitated the signatures of hostile politicians.

"You understand!" said Gomez. "The writing must not look different and you must use the same kind of pencil. Now give me some paper."

He smoked a cigarette before he began to write, for the space at the foot of Evelyn's note was limited. Grahame probably knew the girl's hand, but would be deceived by a clever imitation of it in the form of a postscript under her signature. The note was dated at Rio Frio and left it to be understood that Evelyn expected him there, but the postscript directed him to land on the beach near Valverde, where a guide would look out for him for several nights.

"There are two words we had better alter; the Americans do not often use them," said the clerk cautiously, and Gomez agreed to the change.

"You will have it sent off and make arrangements for the Englishman to be met," he added with a smile. "And now I must start for Villa Paz to tell the President."

Half an hour later he mounted in the *patio,* and Evelyn, hearing the clatter of hoofs, looked out through the half-opened lattice and watched him ride away. As he had an armed escort and a spare mule, she imagined he meant to make a long journey, and Grahame might arrive before he returned.

Soon after the party had gone, the señora Garcia came in and stood looking at the girl as if she had

something to say. Her air of sullen dislike was less marked than usual, and Evelyn, remembering the sound she had heard during her interview with Gomez, suspected that she had listened at the door. Now the woman looked anxious and embarrassed, and while she hesitated Evelyn studied her. The señora must have possessed unusual beauty and was handsome yet, although she was getting stout and losing her freshness, as women of Spanish blood do at an early age in hot climates. Her skin had been spoiled by cosmetics and her face was clumsily touched with paint and powder. Evelyn felt a half contemptuous pity; there was something pathetic in her crude attempts to preserve her vanishing charm.

The señora made signs which Evelyn supposed to mean that Gomez had gone away, and then she took out some silver and paper currency. Putting it into the girl's hand, she pointed to the door.

Evelyn started, for the hint was plain; the señora was anxious to get rid of her rival. Evelyn grasped at the chance to go. The money could be repaid; it might be some time before Grahame arrived, and the woman could be trusted to convey a note to him, because she could not give it to Gomez without betraying her complicity in the girl's escape.

For a time they struggled to grasp each other's meaning, but at last the señora Garcia showed she understood that she was to deliver a note to an Englishman who would come in search of the girl. Evelyn was to find a peon who lived outside the town and would put her on the way to Villa Paz. It would, no doubt, prove a difficult journey, but she was determined to make it.

She was soon ready, and walked carelessly across the plaza as if she had no object. The townspeople knew her, and she met with no troublesome curiosity. After a time, she entered a shady street, where she stopped once or twice to look into a shop. Leaving it at the other end, she came out into a hot, stony waste, dotted with tall aloes and clumps of cactus, and presently reached a dilapidated adobe hut.

As she stood, hesitating, before it a man came out to meet her and she felt her heart beat fast, for she was now confronted by her first danger. The fellow might rob her or perhaps take her back. His white clothes were threadbare, but they were clean, and on the whole she liked his look; and the sight of a woman peeping through the door was somehow reassuring.

It was not easy to make him understand what she wanted, but he looked thoughtful when she repeated a word the señora Garcia had taught her. Then he went in, apparently to consult the woman, and, returning, signified that he would do what she wished. She must, however, go on alone to a village some distance off; on the way he would overtake her with a mule. Evelyn thought it curious that he had not asked for money, but as he seemed anxious that she should not delay she set off. So far, her escape had proved easier than she had imagined.

The sun was at its highest, and it was very hot; the road was a rough track where loose stones lay among the heavy dust. Where water ran down the hillside in artificial channels, there were palms and belts of foliage; elsewhere outcropping rock and stones flung up a dazzling brightness. In the background, rugged peaks

rose against a sky of intense blue, and far off on the opposite hand a misty gleam indicated the sea.

Evelyn soon began to get tired, and she found her thin shoes badly suited to the roughness of the ground. The dust that rose about her gathered on her skin; she got hot and thirsty; but the water she tried to drink was slimy and she toiled on. It seemed wiser to press forward while she could, for there was nobody at work in the scattered fields. Her eyes ached with the glare and her feet were sore, but the peon did not come, and when she looked back the road wound along the hillside, white and empty. Here and there tall trees filled the hollows among the rocks, but the country seemed deserted and she could not see a house anywhere.

At last, when the sun was low and the shadows were long and cool, she saw a cluster of small white patches shining amid a belt of green ahead, and supposed this was the *aldea* the peon had meant. Limping on wearily, she came within half a mile of it, and then, finding a place where she was hidden by a clump of cactus, she sat down to watch the road. She might run some risk of being robbed or stopped if she entered the village alone, for it was obvious that a well-dressed foreigner traveling on foot could not hope to escape notice, and the hill peasants would probably not understand her few words of Castilian.

The shadows lengthened until they covered the hillside, and the air got cool, but her guide did not come, and Evelyn began to wonder what had delayed him. He had seemed willing to assist in her escape, and she suspected that he must sympathize with the revolutionaries; but, if so, it was strange that the señora

Garcia should have known the password which had apparently decided him. She had, however, been told that these people were fond of intrigue, and that a general plot was often accompanied by minor conspiracies, so to speak, one inside the other. The señora Garcia had perhaps some object of her own to serve; but this did not matter—it was more important that the peon did not arrive.

It began to get dark. The dew soaked Evelyn's thin dress, and she felt hungry and achingly tired. Then a light or two twinkled among the trees and some one began to sing to a guitar. The lights and the music, with their suggestions of home and rest after the day's toil, troubled the girl. She was alone and apparently deserted, with enemies behind her and the way ahead unknown. For a few minutes her courage failed and she was in danger of breaking down; then, with a determined effort, she recovered her calm and roused herself to listen.

The music had grown plainer, and she recognized an air she had heard when she sat with Grahame in the *patio* of the International. The contrast was too great, and brought her poignant memories. She was no longer a person of consequence, indulged in every wish, but a homeless fugitive. Then she thought of Grahame, who had translated the song they were singing, for the plaintive refrain of *Las Aves Marinas* carried clearly through the cooling air. Had the wild sea-hawk got her message, and was he already coming to her rescue? But even this was not of first consequence. What about the peon? Had he betrayed her?

Everything was silent upon the hillside, but a faint breeze was getting up and sighed among the stones.

There was a splash of water in the distance, but no sound came from the road. It ran back, a dim white streak, into the deepening gloom, and then faded out of sight upon the shoulder of a hill. There was no movement on it as far as the girl could see.

She waited what seemed an interminable time, and then a faint drumming caught her attention, and grew into a welcome beat of hoofs. Some one was coming along the road. She watched eagerly, straining her eyes to catch a glimpse of the rider. At last an object emerged from the shadow, and as it drew nearer she could see that it was a man riding a mule.

With her nerves at high tension and her heart beating fast, Evelyn left her hiding place in the cacti and stepped out into the middle of the road. The man must see her now, and she had involved herself in fresh difficulties if he were not the peon she expected.

He came on fast; he had caught sight of her and was urging his mule. When he pulled up beside her and dropped from the animal, muttering exclamations in an unknown tongue, Evelyn staggered. It was an Indian from the hills.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN THE CAMP OF THE HILLSMEN

EVELYN instinctively drew back a few paces. Through her brain was beating insistently the admonition that had helped her much in the past few days:

"Keep calm! Don't let him think you are afraid!"

Her first thought had been flight, to the village; but reason told her that was impossible. Here alone on the silent hillside, in the early night, a white woman with this strange Indian, there came over her again a pride in her American blood. She felt that she was a match for him, in wits if not in strength. And with the thought came courage.

She pointed to the mule, then to herself, then to the village; and explained in Spanish.

The Indian shook his head, and stood stolidly beside his mount. After his first exclamations he had remained silent, watching Evelyn intently; but she felt reassured when he made no move to approach her. As a matter of fact, his mind at that moment was a chaos of conjectures and possibilities; and while he hesitated Evelyn gasped with relief. Down the road, carrying distinctly over the night air, came the sound of furious riding—faint at first and then growing nearer,

quickly nearer. Even if it were not the peon, at least two strangers would be safer than one.

With a guttural grunt that might have meant anything, the Indian jumped upon his mule and started off toward the village, urging the animal along; and Evelyn stepped farther back into the shadow of the cacti. She felt that she had reached the breaking-point. Yet she must nerve herself this once more, for without her guide she could not go on.

The hoof-beats drew near; in a minute they would pass and the rider be swallowed up in the gloom beyond. Evelyn opened her mouth and tried to call to him; but her voice failed her. Her worn-out body and her overtaxed nerves were holding her powerless to move or cry. She could only stand, helpless, and watch him sweep past.

But the peon's keen eyes had caught sight of the white dress fluttering against the dark outline of the cacti, and even as he passed he reined in his mule. A few moments later he was beside her, holding his battered hat in his hand.

"Your servant, señorita," he said courteously.

Evelyn never could remember distinctly what happened after that. She had only a hazy recollection of climbing upon the mule and trying to cling there, while the man trotted beside her carrying a long, iron-pointed staff. Somewhere near the village they had turned off the main road and followed a rough path that led up into the hills. And there they had stopped at a small *hacienda,* where Evelyn was hospitably received.

When she woke the next morning, in a clean little adobe room, and found a neat-looking Spanish woman smiling upon her, Evelyn smiled in return. Every

muscle in her body ached, and the soles of her feet were blistered, but, for the first time in many days, she felt a sense of perfect security. Still smiling, she murmured the password of the revolutionaries. It meant much to her now.

"Confianza!"

They had a hasty breakfast and started again, but rested for some time in a belt of forest during the heat of the day. In the early evening they approached a white *aldea* perched high upon the edge of a ravine. Evelyn's guide made her understand that they might not be allowed to pass. He implied that she was in no danger, but it was with some anxiety that she rode toward the village.

They skirted the side of the ravine, which was fretted with tumbling cataracts. Steep rocks ran up from the edge of the trail and were lost in climbing forest a hundred feet above, but after a time the chasm began to widen, and small, square houses straggled about its slopes. A barricade of logs, however, closed the road, and as Evelyn approached two men stepped out from behind it. They were ragged and unkempt, but they carried good modern rifles.

"Halt!" ordered one of them.

"Confianza!" the guide answered, smiling, and they let him pass.

Beyond the barricade, the guide stopped in front of an adobe building that seemed to be an inn, for a number of saddled mules were tied around it. Men were entering and leaving and a hum of voices came from the shadowy interior, but the peon motioned to Evelyn that she must get down and wait. Finding a stone

bench where she was left undisturbed, she sat there for half an hour while it grew dark, and then a man came up and beckoned her to enter. She went with some misgivings, and was shown into a room with rough mud walls, where a man sat under a smoky lamp at a table upon which a map and a number of papers were spread. He wore plain, white clothes, with a wide red sash; and two others, dressed in the same way, stood near, as if awaiting his orders. Evelyn knew the man, for she had seen him at the International.

"*Confianza!*" she said. "I believe you are Don Martin Sarmiento."

He gave her a quick glance, and answered in good English:

"It is a surprise to receive a visit from Miss Cliffe. But I must ask who gave you the password?"

"Señora Garcia at Rio Frio."

"That sounds strange. But sit down. There is something we must talk about."

He waited until one of the men brought her a chair.

"I understand you were going to Villa Paz," he then said.

"Yes; I am anxious to join my father."

"I am not sure that will be possible; but we will speak of it again. First of all, I must know why you left Valverde." Sarmiento indicated the others. "These are officers of mine, but they do not speak English, and it is not necessary that you should know their names. You have nothing to fear from us, but I must urge you to be frank."

Evelyn tried to think calmly. She was in the man's power, and he wore the stamp of command, but she

liked his look and did not feel afraid of him. It might be wiser to be candid; but she had an embarrassing story to tell and she began with some hesitation. Sarmiento helped her, now with a nod of comprehension as she slurred over an awkward passage, and now with a look of sympathy, while the others stood silent with expressionless faces.

"Gomez is, of course, a scoundrel, and you were wise to run away," he commented when she stopped. "There are, however, matters I do not quite understand. For example, it would not be to the President's interest that he should quarrel with your father; nor do I think Altiera would approve of an alliance between his secretary and you."

Evelyn blushed and tried to meet the man's searching look.

"I cannot explain these things. I have told you what happened, and I came to you with—confidence."

Sarmiento bowed.

"We respect our password. You are safe with us; but you cannot continue your journey. The roads will be closed before you get through, and there will be fighting in the next few days. When it seems less dangerous, we must try to send you on, but in the meantime I must put you into my daughter's hands."

He gave one of the officers some instructions, and the man beckoned Evelyn, but she hesitated.

"I must pay my guide and send him back."

"We will give him the money, but he will not go back. We shall, no doubt, find a use for him." Sarmiento smiled meaningly as he added: "It looks as if he could be trusted."

Evelyn followed the officer to the back of the house

where creepers trailed about a rude pergola. A sheet of cotton had been stretched among the poles, making a tent in which a light burned. Her companion, saying a few words in Castilian, motioned to Evelyn to go in. She did so, and then stopped abruptly.

The lamp was small and the light was dim; loops of vines falling about it cast puzzling shadows, but Evelyn knew the girl who rose to meet her. She had seen her talking confidentially to Grahame at the International, and was seized by jealous suspicion. A stout, elderly lady in a black dress, who was apparently the girl's duenna, sat farther back in the shadow. Blanca gave Evelyn a friendly smile of recognition, but it cost her an effort to respond. The Spanish girl seemed to understand that something was wrong, and there was an awkward silence while they stood with their eyes fixed on each other. Then Blanca said with a touch of haughtiness:

"I have been told to make you as comfortable as possible, but I am sorry there is not much comfort here. One cannot expect it in a camp."

She presented Evelyn to her duenna, and the señora Morales indicated a folding chair.

"You come at a bad time," she remarked in awkward French, languidly opening a fan. "It seems we are to have more fighting; it is the way of men."

"They must fight," said Blanca. "The cause is good."

The señora Morales waved her fan. She wore a black silk mantilla fastened tightly round her head like a cowl, and her dark, fleshy face was thickly smeared with powder. Her eyes were lazily contemptuous.

"There are two causes, *niña,* and it is hard to see

how both can be right. But, since men quarrel about them, it is not impossible that both may be wrong."

Evelyn smiled. The duenna's remarks saved the situation from becoming strained; the woman was obviously shrewd in spite of her heavy face.

"They are always quarreling in this country," the señora continued. "Those who will not pay their taxes call themselves Liberators; those who expect favors from the President are Patriots. If he does not give them enough, they conspire with the others to turn him out. Since everybody cannot be satisfied, there is always trouble."

"But our friends are not fighting for rewards!" Blanca objected indignantly.

"A few are disinterested," the señora conceded. She paused, and turned to Evelyn with an authoritative air. "You must tell me why you ran away from Rio Frio. I can guess something, but want to know the rest."

After a moment's hesitation, Evelyn thought it prudent to comply, and the señora seemed to listen with sympathy.

"To run away was the simplest plan, but sometimes the simplest plan is not the best," she said. "Did you think of nothing else?"

"I sent a message to Mr. Grahame of the *Enchantress*, telling him I was in difficulties," Evelyn replied, watching Blanca.

The girl looked up with quick interest, but there was no hint of jealousy in her expression.

"You thought he would come to help you?"

"I knew he would come if it was possible," Evelyn answered.

Blanca looked her in the face with a smile of under-

standing, and Evelyn saw that her suspicions had been unfounded. Grahame was nothing to the girl.

"My father must know this at once!" she said, and hurried away.

Don Martin came back with her and questioned Evelyn, and then he stood thoughtfully silent for some moments.

"It is fortunate I heard this news," he said. "Your message may be intercepted, and we must try to warn Grahame that you are in our hands." He gave Evelyn a steady look. "I believe he will be satisfied with that."

"You can tell him that I feel safe," Evelyn answered.

Don Martin left her with a bow, and shortly afterward they heard somebody riding hard along the edge of the ravine. When the beat of hoofs died away Blanca touched Evelyn's arm.

"There will be some supper after a while, but let us walk a little way up the path."

They went out into the dark, passing slowly between shadowy rows of bushes which Evelyn thought were young coffee plants. She waited, believing that her companion meant to take her into her confidence.

"You were rash in sending for Mr. Grahame," Blanca began. "We must hope our messenger arrives in time to stop him, but for all that——"

"Do you wish him to come?" Evelyn asked.

Blanca smiled.

"In a sense, it does not matter to me whether he comes or not, though I would not wish him to run into danger. But he would not come alone."

Evelyn started. It was not Grahame, but Walthew,

in whom Blanca was interested. Somehow she had not thought of that.

"Of course, you met Mr. Walthew in Havana," she said.

"And at Rio Frio!" There was a hint of triumphant coquetry and something deeper in Blanca's voice. "Indeed, Mr. Grahame should be grateful to me, because it was I who kept him his companion. Mr. Walthew had been dangerously ill, and was thinking of going home—though of course he did not tell me this——"

"But if he did not tell you!"

"How did I know?" Blanca laughed. *"Cariña mia,* how do we know such things? Is a man's face a mask? Have we no guide except what he says?"

Evelyn thought of Carmen, for Blanca had something of the great coquette's allurement and power. It was not an unconscious attraction she exercised, but the skill with which it was directed was primitive and instinctive rather than intelligent.

"And you persuaded Mr. Walthew to stay!" she said. "Did you find it hard?"

"Hard? Oh, no! It is not hard to persuade a young man, unless one is a fool. A word or two is enough, and I told him he might become a great *libertador* like Bolívar and Garibaldi."

Evelyn laughed. She liked Walthew, but he was a very modern American, and the thought of his emulating Garibaldi tickled her. Then, although it was dark, she was aware of a change in her companion's mood. Blanca's pose was different, it had somehow hardened, and her head was lifted high.

"You find this amusing?" she asked in a haughty tone.

"I suppose I do, in a way," Evelyn admitted deprecatingly. "You see, I know my countrymen, and we're not romantic, as a rule."

"Then it is clear you do not know Mr. Walthew. He is young, but he has the spirit of these others, the great *libertadores.*"

"I've no doubt that's true," Evelyn agreed, putting her hand on Blanca's arm. "Indeed, I like and admire him very much."

They turned back to the house presently, on friendly terms, for the Spaniard's anger flares up quickly but soon burns down. Evelyn, however, saw that matters had gone farther than she thought, and she imagined that Walthew would have some trouble with his relatives when he went home.

"But how did you and your father come to meet Mr. Walthew, and what is the *Enchantress* doing on the coast?" she asked.

"You do not know?" There was a hint of gratified superiority in the girl's tone. "She is bringing us the rifles that we need."

Evelyn asked no more questions, because her talk with Blanca had given her much to think about, and when supper was over she sat outside the tent alone. The moon was rising above the tall sierra that ran in a rugged line across the sky. The air was warm and still, and she could hear water splashing down in the bottom of the ravine. Now and then there was a clatter of hoofs as a messenger rode up, and sometimes an order was followed by a patter of feet. Then for a time everything was silent except for a murmur of voices in the inn.

The girl noticed this vacantly, for her mind was

busy, and she was filled with a strange excitement. For the last week or two she had borne a heavy strain, and her thoughts had been concentrated on finding a means of escape. Now they were free to dwell upon a greater matter. The struggle that began when she boarded the *Enchantress* was ended, and she could rejoice in her own defeat, as she had not been quite able to do when, on first surrendering, she had written her note at Rio Frio. Prudence, ambition, and self-interest were driven from the field; love had utterly routed them. She loved Grahame, and she knew that he loved her, though he had not avowed it yet. Blanca had spoken truly: words were not needed: it was easy to read a man's heart.

Evelyn knew what he thought. He was a poor adventurer, and she was rich. She blushed with shame, remembering how this had once weighed with her. Now it did not matter at all. Nothing mattered except that he belonged to her; but while this had never been so plain, it had not dawned on her with a sudden flash. The light had been steadily creeping in for a long time, while she stubbornly tried to shut it out, until she abandoned her futile efforts and let the warming brightness flood her.

Then she thought of Grahame's danger. Don Martin had not received the note. Suppose it had fallen into Gomez's hands. What use might not that half-breed make of it!

Evelyn shuddered, and breathed a half-conscious prayer that Don Martin's messenger might reach her lover in time.

CHAPTER XXV

A TRIAL OF SPEED

NIGHT was falling over the troubled water, and there were threats of a tropical storm. The *Enchantress,* with her anchor down, rolled uneasily on the broken swell. A sandy point ran out to windward, but the combers that beat upon its seaward side with a thunderous roar swirled in a white turmoil round its end and filled the lagoon with an angry heave. The palms on the landward shore bent in the wind and the dense green jungle behind them rolled in tossing waves of green. To the north, the sky was barred by leaden clouds and the sea-tops cut against it, lividly white.

A trail of smoke whirled about the funnel, now streaming out to lee, now eddying down, for a quantity of ammunition and contraband material had just been landed, and Grahame was ready to go to sea again. There was some danger in remaining, but the weather was bad, and he half expected fresh instructions from Don Martin.

While he sat smoking in the lee of the deck-house and Walthew leaned against the rail, Macallister looked out of the engine-room door.

"I can give ye steam enough to take her out at half an hour's notice, but if ye're no' likely to need it, I'll bank my fires," he said.

"We won't heave anchor unless we're forced to; it's not an enticing night," Grahame replied, and Walthew nodded, as in the pause that followed he heard the rumble of the surf upon the shoals.

"What do you reckon has been going on inland?" he asked. "The fellows who took the guns ashore didn't seem to have much news, but they believed you were right in thinking this might be the last important cargo we'd have to run."

"The Government has arrested Castillo, and no doubt brought pretty strong pressure to bear on him. I'm afraid he couldn't stand up against it, and has given his fellow conspirators away. The President seems no fool, and Gomez is a cunning rascal, but I'm not sure they could keep their plans dark because the opposition have their spies and sympathizers everywhere. The consequence is that both parties may be driven into prompt action instead of quietly finishing their preparations."

"I expect that's so," said Walthew thoughtfully. "I wish I knew, because I must see Don Martin and make a trip to Rio Frio before we leave the coast for good."

"You know best; but I imagine it means trouble with your people when you go home."

"It may, for a time," Walthew answered with a dogged look. "Still, they'll come round, and I'm glad to think that, considering this job as a business proposition, we have done pretty well. That will appeal to the old man. Gun-running's not the line he wanted me to take, but he'll be tickled when he sees that I've made good at it."

"I wouldna' say but he might like Miss Sarmiento

as weel as yin o' they hussies at the Florida hotel," Macallister remarked encouragingly. "There was yin in blue, but no' much o' it, with a flagpole in her hat, that gave me what I've heard ye call the googly eye——"

Walthew chuckled.

"That girl has roomsful of money."

"Then she might hae bought some clothes," the Scotsman retorted.

They were silent for a few minutes, and through the quietness they heard the splash of canoe paddles.

"We may get some news," Walthew said.

The canoe ran alongside, and a half-breed handed up a dirty note. Grahame opened it, and his jaws set and a curious glint came into his eyes when he read Evelyn's message.

"Where did this come from?" he called sharply to the waiting half-breed. In his anxiety he had spoken in English.

The messenger shook his head.

"No entiendo."

Grahame repeated the question in Spanish, and added: "Tell me quickly!"

"A man brought it down from the hills a half-hour ago. That's all I know," the half-breed explained.

"All right; you may go."

Grahame turned to Walthew and Macallister and showed them the crumpled note.

"I don't think our partnership agreement covers a risky private undertaking of this kind, and you can turn me out, if you like, but I'm going," he said.

"And I'm coming with you," Walthew replied

cheerfully. "I've some business of my own at Rio Frio."

"You can't come! How is Mack to run the boat alone?"

"Weel," said Macallister, "I'm thinking that's no' impossible. Onyway, ye'll take him. We'll quarrel about who's to command her if ye leave him on board."

Grahame saw they were both determined; his comrades meant to stand by him, if it cost them the vessel. He was touched, but there was no time to indulge in sentiment.

"We'll talk of it later. Start the windlass and stir the fires. I'll want all the steam you can give me."

"Ye'll get it," Macallister replied, and vanished below, while Grahame went forward when the windlass began to clank and the cable tightened.

Speed was urgently needed. It was several days since the note had been written, and he dared not speculate about what might have happened in the meanwhile. Evelyn was not easily frightened; she would not have sent for him unless the danger was imminent. Then, the postscript stated that a guide would look out for him between midnight and three o'clock in the morning, at a place mentioned, and the *Enchantress* must be driven hard to get there in time. If she arrived too late, he must steam out to sea before dawn broke and wait for another night.

The windlass rattled faster, the chain ran in as the anchor left the ground, and, seeing Miguel ready with the tackle at the cathead, Grahame went aft to the wheel. The gong clanged the signal "Full ahead," and the screw began to throb. There was a crash forward

as the swinging anchor struck the bow, but Miguel had men enough to stow it, and Grahame fixed his eyes ahead as he turned his wheel. Rolling across the broken swell, the *Enchantress* stemmed the strong flood-tide; bending palms and shadowy beach were sliding past, and the turmoil on the shoals drew nearer. Ahead was a narrow channel with about a fathom of water to the good, but the leading marks were obscured and Grahame doubted if he could find it. If the boat struck, she would be washed up, badly damaged, among the sands; but the tide was rising, and before long Macallister would have raised full steam. It was unthinkable that they should lose time, and Grahame meant to take his chance.

Spray flew about her forward; as the swell got steeper she dipped to the knightheads, and Miguel, running aft, began to use the lead. Grahame did not stop him, although sounding was a matter of form, because she would drive aground before he could bring her head round if he missed the narrow deep.

She crept past the point, rolling wildly and lifting out her screw, while the air got thick with spray and the thud of engines was drowned by the turmoil of the sea. Some distance off, white ridges leaped out of the gathering dark, but nearer at hand they were broken by the shoals and raged in foaming confusion. The *Enchantress* must cross this belt without much steam to help her, but it was obvious that Macallister was hard at work below, for thick smoke with fiery sparks in it poured from the funnel.

Miguel's white-clad figure, swaying in the channels, cut against the gloom, but Grahame could not hear his hail. Though he glanced at the compass now and

then, he was feeling his way rather by instinct than definite guidance, and so far the upward sweep of the bows showed there was sufficient water under the vessel. Sometimes a sea came on board and poured aft in a frothing flood, but she was steadily forging ahead, and a few minutes would take her across the worst of the shoals.

Suddenly she stopped with a crash, lurched sideways, and lay still while a foam-tipped mass of water rolled up ahead. It broke on board, burying her forward half, and the next moment Grahame was wet to the waist; but she lifted as the roller surged by; and then struck the shoal again. A few more blows of that kind would crush in her bilge, but Grahame set his teeth and clung grimly to his wheel. There was nothing to be done but wait; the crash would warn Macallister what was required of him, and if he could not drive her off, they must cut the boats adrift and leave her to her fate.

Another sea came tumbling in, but while its crest broke across the rail it picked her up and she moved on slowly with the water sluicing aft down her inclined deck. For a few seconds Grahame held his breath, waiting for the shock; but she went on, and lifted her head buoyantly as the next comber rolled up. When she had lurched over it and the spray had blown away, he saw that the sea was more regular and the worst of the turmoil lay astern. Five minutes afterward, she reeled out into open water, and Macallister came on deck.

"We've started the bilge-pump, but it's no' drawing much," he said. "I dinna think she's the waur for the knocks she got."

"That's satisfactory. You know what you have to do."

Macallister smiled with quiet enjoyment.

"We've no' had the need to drive her yet, but noo I'll let ye see."

He went below, and Grahame gave Miguel an order, for in swinging round after leaving the lagoon the *Enchantress* had brought the wind on her quarter, and she carried a good spread of sail. He would not, however, luff her off her course to make the work easier; the crew must hoist the canvas as best they could, and there was a furious banging and clatter of flying blocks as fore-staysail, foresail, and mainsail went up. Then she listed down with her rail in the white surges that boiled up to lee, while tall, hollow-fronted combers ranged up astern and sped after her.

Wire shrouds, strung to the breaking-point, shrieked in wild harmonies as the blasts struck them; chain funnel-guys roared in deeper tones, and there was a confused groaning of masts and booms. Spray swept her, lashing Grahame's back and blowing past his head in clouds, and now and then a sea-top broke on board; but she drove on furiously before the wind.

After a while Grahame called Miguel to the helm and stood in the lee of the deckhouse, pipe in mouth, for he had now time to think. He could make no plans until he landed, but it was plain that he must go to Rio Frio; and, if possible, he must leave Walthew behind. He could not allow the lad to run the risk, and Macallister would need him. Some help might be had from the revolutionaries, and he must try to find Don Martin. If he failed to do so, much would have to be left to chance.

Grahame looked at another side of the matter. Suppose he rescued Miss Cliffe, what then? Though the gun-running had been profitable, he was an adventurer with very limited means. He could not trade upon Cliffe's gratitude, though he loved the girl. He did not know when he began to love her, but he had for some time made stern efforts to drive the thought of her out of his mind. Perhaps he might have succeeded had nothing unusual happened, for he knew his disadvantages; but now his determination suddenly had been swept away. Evelyn was in danger; somehow this made clear the strength of the feelings with which he had grappled. The future was clouded; there were difficulties to be faced; but he felt that if she had any love for him he could not give her up.

The gale freshened; but Grahame would not shorten sail. There was not much time to spare, and the gear was standing well. He could trust the helm to Miguel and might have slept, but, although he imagined his strength might be severely taxed during the next few days, it was impossible for him to rest. In spite of his anxiety, he was sensible of an exultant excitement. The girl he loved was in danger, but she had sent for him. Then, the adventure he was embarking on had a fascination of its own, and he smiled as he remembered that his ancestors had often in past days ridden across the dark marches, leading the Border Spears. It was not for nothing the hot blood of the old mosstroopers ran in his veins.

Swept by the seas on her quarter, the *Enchantress* drove on, and Grahame lurched about the slanted deck and stood amidst the spray that whirled across her stern. She was going fast; his glances at the recording

log astonished him, for he had not believed her capable of the speed it showed. His fierce impatience seemed to have inspired thudding engines and quivering hull, and he thrilled when a great, white-topped comber rolled up and swept her on. Flame blew from the funnel, wet canvas, straining in black curves, reeled through the dark, and the sea sped back, snowy white, toward the plunging bows.

At last, however, lights shone in the gloom, and Grahame ordered the canvas to be lowered. It cost the crew an arduous struggle, but they made all fast, and Grahame, ringing for half-speed, took the wheel. There was a point a short distance from the town that would break the sea, and by steaming in behind it he might get a boat away. Landing would be difficult, and it was important that he should find the right spot.

He watched the beach with his glasses as the *Enchantress* swung inshore, and when presently the combers changed to a steep, troubled swell that ended in a white band of surf, he stopped the engines and told Miguel to hoist out the gig. The navigation lights had been extinguished, but he thought that anybody carefully watching for the steamer could see her. The men had some trouble in lowering the boat, but as soon as she was in the water Grahame jumped on board and told the men to push off. Then, as they got out their oars, a dark figure leaped from the steamer's rail and Walthew, alighting in the sternsheets, turned to his comrade with a grin.

"I'm here, and you'll smash the boat if you try to send me back," he said. "You see, I suspected what you were getting after when you put me at a job it was awkward to leave."

"Well, I did my best, anyway," Grahame laughed.

Walthew took an oar, for the swell was high enough to make progress difficult, but they found smoother water near the land, and stopped pulling just outside the fringe of surf. Waiting for a slacker interval in the shoreward rush of hissing rollers, they drove her in as fast as she could go, and jumped overboard when she touched the sand. A wave broke into her, but they ran her up safely, and Grahame turned to Walthew after they had emptied the water out.

"I don't think I'm straining my authority by telling you to go off with Miguel," he said.

"Anyhow, I'm not going," Walthew replied doggedly. "Our association is a partnership, and I mean to come along. I don't know that I'll be of much help to you, but the job you've undertaken is too big for one."

Grahame saw that objections would be useless, and, feeling that his pistol was loose, he walked up the beach, with Walthew following a few yards behind.

CHAPTER XXVI

TRAPPED

FOR a few minutes the men toiled silently across loose, wet sand, and then, on reaching a belt of shingle near high-water mark, stopped to look about. Lights gleamed in the town across the bay, but except for that it was very dark. A clump of trees that fringed the end of a ridge of higher ground could barely be distinguished, but Grahame decided that this must be the spot Evelyn had mentioned in her note. Though the shingle rolled beneath his feet, the sound it made was lost in the roar of the surf upon the point. Dry sand blew past, pricking his face, and when he turned toward the sea he saw a group of indistinct objects still standing about the boat.

"What are they waiting for?" he asked. "I told them to push off."

"I guess old Miguel takes an interest in us and wants to see we're all right. He knows something about these fellows' tricks, and may not share our confidence."

"Well, I guess those are the trees where we should meet our guide."

"The fellow might have come down to the beach," Walthew remarked. "I was busy helping Mack during

the run and hadn't much time to think, but it now strikes me as curious that Miss Cliffe was able to send the note and arrange for a guide when she was a prisoner."

"She must have got into touch with some of Don Martin's spies, and his friends would be ready to help. But we had better get on."

They crossed the shingle, seeing nothing that suggested there was anybody about, but Walthew grew uneasy as they approached the trees. The belt of timber was wrapped in gloom, and rolled back up the rising ground in shadowy masses that rustled in the wind. It had somehow a forbidding look, and the nearer he got the less he liked it. He was not daunted, and meant to go on, but his nerves were highly strung and his glances suspicious as he tried to pierce the dark.

They found a trail through tall grass and reeds, and followed it across a patch of boggy soil until it led them to an opening in the trees. Here a shadowy object rose out of the gloom, and Walthew instinctively felt for his pistol. The abrupt movement dislodged a small bundle of clothes which he carried by a strap across his shoulder, and it fell to the ground. Then he saw the man come forward, waving his hand.

"This way, señor!" he called to Grahame, who was some yards in front.

Walthew felt tempted to leave the bundle. He wanted to watch the man; but there was a packet of cartridges among the clothes he had dropped, and he thought they might prove useful. Stooping down, he felt among the grass, but had to move once or twice before he found the bundle; then, springing to his feet,

he saw that Grahame and the other had vanished. The next moment his comrade's voice reached him, hoarse and breathless:

"Run!"

That Grahame said nothing more was ominous; but Walthew did not run back to the boat. Drawing his pistol, he plunged in among the trees, but as he reached them he felt a stunning blow on his head. He staggered and fell into a thicket, blinded by blood that ran into his eyes. A struggle seemed to be going on near by, and, getting upon his knees, he fired at random. He thought a man ran toward him, and he fired again, but his mind was confused and he could hardly see. For all that, he got upon his feet and stumbled forward, dazed but determined to rescue his comrade.

A few moments afterward it dawned on him that he was going the wrong way, for he seemed to have come out on the beach. Two or three men were hurrying toward him, but the pistol would not go off. Stumbling on with his hand clenched on the barrel, ready to use the butt, he tripped and fell among the rattling shingle. Then his senses left him.

The next thing of which he was conscious was a cool splash on his face, and while he wondered what it was, he felt that he lay upon something that moved in an erratic manner. It was not shingle, for it was smooth when he touched it, but a minute or two passed before he realized that he was lying in the sternsheets of the gig. She was plunging sharply, the spray flew aft in showers, and when he wiped his eyes he saw that the men were pulling hard. With some trouble

he got to his knees, and the top of a wave that washed across the gunwale struck his face.

"Where is the señor Grahame?" he asked faintly.

"Who knows!" somebody answered. "It seems the *rurales* have him. We came too late."

Walthew groaned, for his head was getting clearer. His comrade had fallen into a trap.

"Pull her round," he said. "We're going back!"

For a moment or two nobody replied. The gig lurched wildly, and a sea-top broke on board. Walthew dimly saw the men swing to and fro at the oars. Their blurred figures cut the sky as the bow went up, and then stood out against white foam as the craft plunged into a hollow.

"It is not possible, señor," Miguel said breathlessly.

Walthew scrambled to his feet, and stood swaying awkwardly with the violent motion, in danger of going overboard. The sea had got worse, and the savage wind lashed his wet face. It was blowing very hard, and the turn of the tide had brought broken water nearer inshore; he could hear the roar of the surf upon the beach. It would now be dangerous to land; but he must try to rescue his comrade. He seized the oar the man nearest to him pulled. The fellow pushed him back and, losing his balance as the boat plunged over a comber, he fell heavily upon the floorings.

"We will smash the boat if we land, and there are *rurales* on the beach," he heard Miguel say. "The sea is bad; perhaps we cannot reach the steamer."

Walthew realized that Miguel was right. The men were unarmed, except for their knives, and something had gone wrong with his pistol. Even if they escaped

being swamped by the surf, it would be impossible to cross the beach in face of a hostile force. He lay still with a groan. He felt faint, his head ached excruciatingly, and blood still trickled into his eyes. He had not seen the *Enchantress* when he stood up, and the desperate way the men were rowing showed that they found it hard to drive the boat offshore.

After a while, however, a hail came out of the dark, the men pulled furiously, and then threw down their oars. There was a crash and a rope fell into the boat, which surged violently forward, grinding against the steamer's side. Walthew did not know how he got on board, and he imagined that he fainted soon afterward, for the next thing he remembered was trying to get up from the top grating in the engine-room, where Macallister sat beside him, holding a rag and a can of hot water.

"Keep still while I tie up the cut," he said.

"But they've got Grahame!" Walthew exclaimed, trying to rise.

Macallister gently pushed him back.

"I ken. A bad job, but we might have lost ye both." Then he took up a piece of linen. "It's lucky ye'll no' need stitching, but maybe this will nip."

Walthew's head smarted intolerably after the bandage was applied, but the dazed feeling left him when Macallister gave him something to drink, and he began to ask questions.

"Miguel heard a shot and ran back up the beach with the others," Macallister told him. "They found ye reeling aboot and brought ye down to the gig, with two or three *rurales* no' far behind; the rest must have gone off with Grahame before our men came up. They

had just time to launch her before the *rurales* began to shoot, but nobody was hit. Looks as if ye had been knocked oot with a carbine butt."

"Where are we now?" Walthew asked.

"Steaming back to the lagoon as fast as I can drive her, and that's aboot four knots against the gale. The best thing we can do is to send Don Martin word, but ye'll go to sleep in the meanwhile. I canna' look after ye; I hae my hands full."

The clanging of hard-driven engines, which quickened to a furious rattle when the screw swung out, made the need for watchfulness plain, and Walthew crept away to his berth. He wanted to help, but knew that to attempt this would probably result in his falling among the machinery. Dazed by the blow on his head, he soon fell asleep, and when he wakened the vessel was at rest. There was no pounding of engines, and the water no longer gurgled along her side, but he heard voices behind the bulkhead.

Scrambling awkwardly out of the berth, he made his way on deck with some difficulty. The fresh air revived him, and he saw that the *Enchantress* was anchored in the lagoon, but he opened a door close by instead of stopping to look about. Two or three of the revolutionaries whom he knew were sitting round a table in the saloon, and as Walthew came in, white-faced, with staring eyes and a red bandage round his head, one of them threw up his hands.

"Ave Maria!" he exclaimed.

Walthew sat down with a jerk and nodded to Macallister.

"I'm better."

Then he turned to the others.

"What are we going to do?"

"Nothing, until to-night," said one. "We must wait for dark before it is safe to move. They will not keep your comrade at Valverde, and we must try to find out where they have taken him."

"I'll be quite well in a few hours," Walthew declared. "But what is likely to happen to Grahame?"

The man shrugged.

"Who knows! The regular course would be to try him for smuggling arms, but I do not think the President will follow that plan. They may send him to Rio Frio, because it is some distance from the coast, and it is possible he will be given a chance of escaping on the way."

"Do you mean that they may let him go?" Walthew asked eagerly.

"He would not go very far. You must understand that the *rurales* have authority to shoot a prisoner who tries to escape, and the Government finds this useful. Sometimes they arrest a man whom they think the court could not convict, and an excuse is found for not watching him very closely when he is being taken to the nearest jail; perhaps a guard is called away when they stop for food. There is cover near, and the prisoner makes a dash for freedom; then the guard, who has been hiding, fires and the administration is rid of an enemy. Sometimes the *rurales* break into the house of an obnoxious person and, taken by surprise, he gets angry. A threatening movement is enough; he is shot down. It is simpler than taking him before a judge who may be bribed to let him go."

"A gang o' bloodthirsty scoundrels! I'm thinking it's time ye turned on them," Macallister said, while

Walthew sat silent with a tense face and fury in his eyes. "But, so far as we ken, they havena' shot Mr. Grahame."

"No, señor," said another. "I think he is safe, for a time. He might prove too useful for them to shoot, at least, not until they have tried other means."

"If ye believe they can frighten or buy him——" Macallister began savagely; but the man waved his hand.

"Señor, I only think we must set him free as soon as possible, and you will agree about the need for that."

"I'm coming with you," said Walthew grimly. "If I'm not satisfied with your plans, I'll do the thing in my own way."

Macallister gave him a sharp glance. Walthew did not look fit to travel, but Macallister knew that objections would be futile. The boy had grown older and sterner in a night.

The revolutionaries began to talk about what had better be done, and it was decided that Macallister must remain in charge of the vessel, which he would hide in a creek, so as to provide a means of escape, if this should be needed. The others would start for Rio Frio as soon as it was dark and, if they could gather a strong enough force, try to overtake and attack Grahame's escort on the march. Failing this, they would follow the *rurales* to Rio Frio, and be guided by circumstances when they got there. Walthew took no part in the discussion, but when it was finished he got up and stood looking at the others sternly.

"We are going to save my partner, and not to do something that may help you in your political

schemes," he said. "It may save trouble if you bear this in mind."

They assured him that Grahame's rescue was a matter of importance to them; and when, shortly afterward they left the ship, Walthew went to his berth and slept until the afternoon. He was getting better, for it was not the cut but the jar on his skull that had dazed him, and the effect of this was passing.

When the evening mist began to creep across the lagoon a canoe came off and a half-breed stood up in her as she approached the gangway.

"The señores are waiting," he announced.

Walthew shook hands with Macallister.

"I'll either bring him back or stop with him," he said grimly. "Your business is to be ready to take us off."

"Good luck to ye!" returned Macallister in a rather hoarse voice. "If ye're long aboot it, I'll come after ye myself!"

When Walthew got into the canoe and vanished in the haze, Macallister went down to his engine-room and fiercely set about some work that might as well have been left undone.

CHAPTER XXVII

HANDS DOWN

CLIFFE had spent some time at Villa Paz when President Altiera sent for him one morning. It was with mixed feelings that Cliffe obeyed the summons, for his business had proved longer and more difficult than he expected, and he was anxious about Evelyn. Indeed, he wondered whether he should let the concessions go and return to the coast; but he determined to be guided by what took place during the interview.

It was getting hot when Altiera received him, and a glare of reflected light shone through the unshuttered window. Cliffe, looking out over the little town, thought there was an ominous quiet. An hour earlier he had watched a company of slouching, dusty soldiers, equipped as if for service, march through the narrow streets; but there was now no one about. It struck him as significant that all the green shutters were closed and the entrances to the *patios* barred. This might have some bearing on his business, but it was not of the first importance, and he turned to the President and studied him closely.

There was a subtle change in Altiera since their last meeting. His manner was somehow less cordial, and suspicion seemed to lurk in his dark eyes. When he had indicated a chair he looked at Cliffe steadily.

"You have, no doubt, thought over the matter we talked about not long ago," he began. "It is necessary that I should know when we may expect the loan."

"That, as I think you understand, depends on when I may expect the concessions."

"I cannot sign the papers yet. It would provoke a storm of indignation that I cannot risk. My enemies have taught the people that I am robbing them when I make a grant to foreigners."

"In short, you mean to put down the rebels before you conclude the deal with me."

"You have guessed right. There will be no complaints when I have shown that I have the upper hand."

"If I had known your plans at the beginning, I'd have acted differently," Cliffe said.

Altiera gave him a piercing glance.

"Señor, I do not think you are justified in charging us with a want of candor, because there is evidence that you have not been quite honest with us. Our most dangerous enemy is Martin Sarmiento, and we find him staying at your hotel in Havana, where the señorita Cliffe helps him in an attempt to escape observation."

"I do not know the man," Cliffe protested with a puzzled air.

"Then it is strange that we should have caught a messenger bringing you a note from him," Altiera answered. "I think we shall gain nothing by fencing, señor."

Cliffe frowned.

"I've just got to say that I've never, to my knowledge, met Don Martin. What was the note about?"

"We will talk of that later. In the meanwhile, I

understand you have decided not to let me have the money that we need?"

"Not without a written promise that the papers will be signed and handed to me in a fortnight. Unless you consent, I must start for Valverde at once."

Altiera pondered for a few moments, knitting his brows.

"You are, no doubt, anxious to rejoin your daughter," he said slowly. "Perhaps I had better tell you that she is not at Valverde."

"Not at Valverde!" Cliffe exclaimed. "Then where has she gone?"

"I cannot tell you."

Cliffe clenched his hand, but would not let his alarm master him. He suspected treachery and knew that he must be cool.

"Your secretary assured me that Miss Cliffe would be safe with the *alcalde's* wife; I shall hold him responsible. Why did she leave Valverde?"

"It seems the señorita got tired of waiting, and set off to rejoin you. This is most likely, but it is said in the cafés that she ran away with the señor Gomez."

Cliffe looked up with his face set and an ominous sparkle in his eyes.

"That is a lie!"

"Personally, I think so; but having some knowledge of the sex, I would not care to predict what a romantic young woman might do."

"Get on with your tale!"

Altiera regarded Cliffe calmly.

"The señorita had my secretary's escort, but, finding the road dangerous, he made for Rio Frio, where he put her in safe hands. Her liberty was not interfered

with and one morning she left the house and did not come back."

Cliffe got up and advanced a yard or two across the floor.

"You mean she ran away? Why did she do so?"

"Your pardon, señor!" Altiera spread out his hands with a mocking smile. "There is no reason to believe she had any cause to run away; but, not knowing your daughter's character, I cannot tell you why she went."

"Very well," said Cliffe, restraining himself with an effort. "I must ask you for an armed escort to Rio Frio, where I will make inquiries. I want the men at once!"

"I am afraid that is impossible. We have news that there are rebels in the mountains. If I gave you a guard, the peons might be incited to attack you, and the trouble would spread before we are ready to deal with it. As President of this country, it is my business to think of its welfare first."

"I understand," Cliffe said very dryly. "If I promised to let you have the money you want, you might see your duty differently."

Altiera looked at him with thoughtful eyes. The American was shrewd, but did not seem as eager as he had expected.

"Señor, the need of funds that would ensure the maintenance of order and firm government justifies a risk one would not take without such a reason. I will give you a guard and send soldiers to make a thorough search for the señorita if we can agree about the loan."

"This means you really do not know where my daughter is. I was not sure of it until now."

Altiera saw he had blundered in admitting that the

girl was no longer in his hands; but while he considered how his mistake could be covered Cliffe resumed:

"It was a cunning plot, but you put it through clumsily, and you're going to find that kidnapping an American woman is a dangerous game for the President of a third-rate republic."

"One must make allowances for the excited imagination of an anxious father," Altiera answered with an indulgent smile. "I deny the plot. There is no need for one. We have a charming young lady left alone in a foreign town who finds waiting tedious and determines to join her relative. This is a simple and satisfactory explanation, without the other that she forms a romantic attachment for an officer of rank. We provide an escort because the country is disturbed, and part of the journey is accomplished. It is not safe for her to go farther, but she is rash, and, disregarding our advice, ventures too far from the house. Then she loses her way and is perhaps seized by the rebels, with the object of embarrassing the Government. We cannot be held responsible, but we are willing to attempt her rescue when we see an opportunity."

The explanation was plausible, and could not be disproved until Cliffe heard his daughter's account. But what he wanted was to find her.

"The opportunity is now, before the rebels begin to move," he said. "You refuse to seize it?"

"You understand why it is impossible. I cannot do anything that might plunge my country into a conflict, unless you show me some reason that would justify the risk."

"I cannot give you such a reason."

Altiera shrugged.

"It is for you to decide! We come to a deadlock; our negotiations break off."

"Very well," said Cliffe. "I leave Villa Paz in an hour, and it wouldn't be wise of you to interfere with my movements. My business with you is known to people who have some political influence in the United States, and if I don't turn up in good time, inquiries will be made."

He turned abruptly and went out. It seemed safer to move quickly, though he imagined the hint he had given Altiera would prevent any attempt to stop him. The President had found a plausible excuse for Evelyn's disappearance, but he would hesitate about detaining an American citizen whose friends could bring pressure to bear at Washington. This supposition was borne out when Cliffe found no trouble in hiring a guide and mules; but while he made the arrangements his brain was working.

He would willingly have met the demand for money, only that Altiera had incautiously admitted that he did not know where Evelyn was. Cliffe had acted on impulse in refusing to submit to further exaction, but calm reflection justified the course. Having a deep distrust of the man, he thought he might take the money and then not undertake the search for the girl. Cliffe determined to set about it himself and make a bid for the help of the revolutionaries. This would involve him in a serious loss, but that did not count. He must rescue his daughter, whatever it cost.

Then he remembered that the President had admitted having intercepted a message to him from the rebel leader. He had meant to insist on learning what

it was about, but had somehow omitted to do so, and it was now too late to reopen the matter. There was, however, a ray of hope in the thought that Sarmiento had tried to communicate with him.

When his baggage had been strapped on a pack-mule, he mounted and rode out of Villa Paz as if making for Valverde, but as soon as they had left the last of the houses behind he pulled up and quietly studied his guide. He was a sturdy, brown-faced peon, dressed in ragged white cotton, with raw-hide sandals and a colored blanket strapped round his shoulders, but he looked trustworthy. Moreover, Cliffe thought his willingness to assist a foreigner who was leaving the President's house without an escort, which must have shown that he had lost the autocrat's favor, had some significance. It was unfortunate that he could not speak much Castilian, but he knew that money talks in a language that is generally understood.

"I have changed my mind; we will not go to the coast," he said, stumbling over the words and helping out his meaning by pointing to the mountains.

The peon nodded.

"To me it is equal where the señor goes, so long as I am paid for the days we spend upon the road."

"Very well," said Cliffe, taking out a handful of silver. "Do you know Don Martin Sarmiento?"

The peon looked doubtful, and Cliffe saw that, as he had suspected, the fellow had some dealings with the President's enemies.

"Don Martin is known to many," he replied cautiously.

Cliffe jingled the silver and awkwardly explained

that he was no longer a friend of the President's and wished to see Sarmiento as soon as he could.

For a time the muleteer did not speak; then he looked up with an air of decision.

"It may be difficult, señor, but we will try," he said, and jerking the pack-mule's bridle abruptly left the road.

They passed through a coffee plantation and a field of sugar-cane, and then as they reached thick forest the muleteer stopped and indicated the road that wound in loops down the hillside.

"It is well the President should think we have gone that way," he remarked with a smile. "He has, no doubt, been told how we left the town."

Cliffe looked back across the wide sweep of sun-scorched country to the shining streak on the horizon. His path led into the mountains and he longed for the sea. Then he thought of Grahame and wondered where he was. Cliffe felt sure the man would help him if he knew his need. He was beginning to suspect what business Grahame had on the coast. He asked his guide about the *Enchantress,* but the fellow did not seem to understand, and it was obvious that he had not heard of Grahame. Then Cliffe urged his mule on and plunged into the steamy shade.

Two days later they rode into a deep gorge filled with giant, creeper-festooned trees, and the guide moved forward slowly, glancing into the shadow that shut in the winding track. It appeared that his caution was justified, for presently a hoarse voice bade them halt, and as they pulled up two men with rifles stepped out into the sunlight.

For some time the muleteer disputed with them,

using emphatic gestures and pointing to Cliffe; and then he went on with one while the other sat down watching the American, with his rifle across his knees. It was very hot, for the sun struck down through an opening in the branches, but although the perspiration dripped from him Cliffe did not think it wise to move. Indeed, he was glad that his mule stood quiet, whisking off the flies.

At last some one called in the forest and Cliffe's guard told him to ride on, though the man followed at a short distance, as if to prevent his escape. A few hundred yards farther on, the gorge widened into a level hollow, and Cliffe saw that he was in a camp.

It was not marked by military order. Men of various shades of color lay about, smoking cigarettes. Some were barefooted, and most were poorly dressed, but all wore red sashes, and good rifles lay ready to their hands. They looked more like brigands than soldiers, and it was hard to imagine they had been drilled, but while their attitudes were slackly negligent, their faces were resolute. In the background, climbing forest, choked with fallen trees and trailing vines, rolled up the steep hillside. It was very hot, and the hum of insects mingled with the sound of drowsy voices.

Two men, better dressed than the others, came forward, and Cliffe dismounted and followed them to a seat in the shadow, where they gave him some cigarettes.

"Now, señor, you will tell us why you came here," said one.

Cliffe had not expected to be addressed in good English, and he looked at the man with surprise.

The Spaniard smiled.

"With us, the consequences of trying to serve one's country is that one finds it safer to live somewhere else. But we will keep to the point."

"I am looking for Don Martin Sarmiento," Cliffe said. "I expect you know where he is."

"That is so, but it would be difficult to reach him, and we leave this place to-night. In fact, it is hard to see what we ought to do with you, but it might help if you told us what your business is with Don Martin."

"I guess you're surprised I should want to see him," Cliffe remarked with some dryness.

"It is natural," said the other. "We know you are a friend of the President's, and we suspect that you have been financing him. The money you gave him would be used to put us down."

Cliffe thought for a few moments. The man seemed a person of some consequence, and apparently commanded the band of rebels. His permission must be obtained before Cliffe could proceed, and since he meant to ask Don Martin's help there was, perhaps, no cause for reticence.

"Very well," he said. "I will tell you why I am going to your leader."

He related what had led to his quarrel with the President, and when he had finished, the man translated the narrative to his comrade.

"It is fortunate, señor, you refused the loan, because you will never get the concessions; Altiera's rule will be over in a day or two. But you believed him when he said he did not know where your daughter is?"

"Yes. He seemed to speak without thinking, and was sorry afterward."

"Then, as the señorita is not in his hands, she is probably in ours, but our forces are scattered, and at present we cannot make inquiries. However, I imagine you will find her quickest by remaining with us—and you will excuse my saying that it would not suit us to let you go. If you were seized by the President's soldiers, he might make some use of you. Have I your promise that you will not try to escape?"

Although the man was courteous, Cliffe thought an attempt to run away would lead to trouble, but this was not what decided him to stay. He had been bred to business, but now deep-rooted impulses were stirring. The President and Gomez had cheated him, and he felt very sore about it, but they had, moreover, carried off and, no doubt, terrorized Evelyn. The thought of this filled him with a fierce desire to get even with them.

"Señores," he said grimly, "you not only have my word not to attempt to escape but you have my pledge to help you in every way I can."

"We start for Rio Frio to-night," the rebel answered in a significant tone.

"Good!" Cliffe said, and glanced about at the little groups of determined looking men. "I'll confess I'm curious to know how you got such good rifles," he added.

The rebel studied him keenly for a moment; and seemed satisfied.

"A countryman of yours bought and landed them for us in small quantities."

"Grahame!" Cliffe exclaimed, and laughed, for he found the situation ironically humorous. He liked Grahame, and suspected that Evelyn was interested in

him; and now it was obvious that the man had helped the revolutionaries to ruin his plans.

"I know him," he said. "As a matter of fact, he's an Englishman."

"At present he is Gomez's prisoner. That is one reason we strike the first blow at Rio Frio."

"Ah! Well, if you mean to rescue him, you can rely on my doing the best I can."

The rebel changed the subject, but Cliffe imagined he had gained his confidence. He was invited to the officers' frugal four o'clock dinner, and afterward sat talking with them while the shadows filled the hollow. Although still anxious about Evelyn, he felt less disturbed, and was sensible of a strange but pleasant thrill. Feelings he thought he had long grown out of were reawakening; there would be no more trucking with the rogues who had cheated him and carried off his daughter. When they next met, he would demand satisfaction with a rifle in his hands. Cliffe admitted that there was something rather absurd and barbarous in the pleasure the thought of the meeting afforded him, but, for all that, the adventure he was embarking on had a strong attraction.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE PRESIDENT'S DESPATCHES

THE sun had set when Walthew urged his worn-out mule up a narrow track that twisted along the hillside through thick timber. The evening was very dark, and thin mist drifted among the giant trees. Creepers streamed down from their interlacing boughs, damp brush projected from the sides of the trail, and Walthew growled savagely when he was buffeted by clusters of dewy leaves. His head ached, the perspiration dripped from his hot face, and he was sore in every limb, while he found the steamy atmosphere almost unbreathable.

The cut on his head was healing, but after a long, forced march from the coast, he had at sunrise left the camp where he and the revolutionaries had spent the night. The country ahead was reported to be watched by the President's soldiers, and as the party was not strong enough to fight, they had separated, hoping to slip past the pickets singly and meet at a rendezvous agreed upon. Walthew reached the spot without being molested, but although he waited for an hour nobody else arrived. It seemed possible, however, that he had mistaken the place, and he determined to push on to Rio Frio, trusting that his companions would rejoin him there. He had been told that as the

President had dealings with foreigners he might be allowed to pass by any soldiers he fell in with when they saw he was an American.

He was, however, still a long way from Rio Frio, his mule was exhausted, and he doubted if he were going the right way. There was nothing to be seen but shadowy trunks that loomed through the mist a yard or two off, and faint specks of phosphorescent light where the fireflies twinkled.

Rocking in his saddle with a painful jar, Walthew thought that if the jaded beast stumbled again as badly it would come down, and he half decided to dismount. He felt that he would be safer on his feet; but the mule, recovering, turned abruptly without his guiding it, and a few moments later the darkness grew thinner.

The trees now rose on one side in a dense, black mass, the ground was more level, and Walthew saw that the animal had struck into a road that led through a clearing. He followed it, in the hope that there was a *hacienda* near, and soon a light shone in the distance. The mule now needed no urging, and in a few minutes a building of some size loomed against the sky. Walthew rode up to it, and as he reached the arched entrance to the *patio* a man appeared, while another man moved softly behind him as if to cut off his retreat.

"Can I get a fresh mule here and perhaps something to eat?" he asked as carelessly as he could.

"Certainly, señor," said the man. "If you will get down, we will put the beast in the stable."

Walthew hesitated. There was no obvious reason why he should distrust the fellow, but he imagined

that he had been watching for somebody coming down the road. The mule, however, was worn out, and he did not think he had much chance of escaping if treachery was intended.

"Very well," he said, dismounting, and when another man came up, he stumbled after the first into the passage.

"You have ridden far, señor, and will enjoy a rest," his guide remarked. "One does not lose time by stopping for food on a long journey."

Walthew felt more suspicious. They were now near a lamp that hung in the arch, and although his companion was dressed like a peon his voice suggested some education. The feeling that his arrival had been expected was stronger, but it was too late to turn back and he went on, surreptitiously making sure that his automatic pistol was loose. He was taken across the *patio,* up an outside staircase, and along a balcony, where his guide opened a door.

"The house is at your disposal," he said with Spanish politeness, bowing to Walthew to enter.

The door was closed sharply and Walthew wondered if he had been trapped as he cast a quick glance about. The room was large, badly lighted, and scantily furnished. Two of its windows were open, but he remembered that they must be some distance from the ground. There seemed, however, to be no reason for alarm. At the far end of the room a table was laid for supper, and a girl and a priest sat near it. They rose as he came forward.

Walthew gasped.

"Blanca!"

The girl seemed equally astonished.

"Señor Walthew!" she exclaimed, and her tone indicated both perplexity and concern. Walthew's clothes were gray with dust, his pose was slack with fatigue, and a dirty bandage covered his forehead.

"You seem surprised," he managed to say; "I guess *I* am." The gleam in his eyes showed the pleasure he felt. "I didn't expect to find you here."

"But where do you come from?"

"From the San Lucar lagoon; traveled as fast as I could, but lost my companions in the bush. They belong to your party."

The priest came forward and Walthew recognized Father Agustin.

"There has been a mistake," the priest said to Blanca, and bowed to Walthew. "You will excuse me; I have an order to give."

Walthew thought it had something to do with his arrival. He was no longer suspicious, but puzzled. He was among friends, but they had received him in a curious manner.

He turned to Blanca with a smile.

"It looks as if I'm intruding, but I hope you won't turn me out."

"Oh, no," she said with a compassionate glance that thrilled him. "You seem ill and tired. Are you hurt?"

"Not much; a scratch on my head. But are you safe here? They told us the woods were full of the President's soldiers."

"We shall be gone at daybreak, and we have a guard." Blanca paused and resumed with an air of relief: "It was fortunate you did not pass the house."

"That's a sure thing," Walthew agreed. "However,

I guess I know what you mean. When I pulled up I fancied your friends were watching for me, and I'd have found the road blocked if I'd gone on. Don't you think you had better tell me what it's all about?"

Blanca hesitated with some color in her face, but just then Father Agustin returned.

"I have warned the men," he informed the girl.

"Señor Walthew wishes to know what is going on," she said.

"It might be better that he should know, and he is to be trusted; but you must decide whether you will tell him or not."

Blanca was silent for a moment, and then began in a rather strained voice:

"We have a spy in the President's household, and word was sent us that a man would leave Villa Paz with some important despatches for Gomez. We believe they contain instructions about what he must do when the fighting begins, but, to avoid suspicion, Altiera is sending a foreign trader to whom he has given some privileges. We expect him to stop and change mules here, because the *hacienda* belongs to one of the President's supporters."

"I see!" said Walthew. "He would not have carried the despatches past this house. But where is its owner?"

"Hiding at a *hacienda* some distance off. He is a timid man, and we had him warned that the rebels were coming to burn the place. An hour after he left with his family we took possession."

"But why did Don Martin send you?" Walthew asked sharply. "Hasn't he men enough?"

Blanca blushed and looked embarrassed, but the

next moment she lifted her head with an air of pride. There was a sparkle in her deep blue eyes.

"I am a patriot, señor, and ready to make a sacrifice for my country. We must seize the despatches, but we do not wish to use force on a foreigner, because this might lead to trouble. Our plan was to change the papers for others and send the messenger on without his knowing that he had lost them. It would not be an easy matter——"

"In short," Father Agustin interposed with some dryness, "the señorita thought she might succeed where a man would fail."

The blood rushed to Walthew's face, for he understood. Blanca meant to use her personal charm to trick and rob the messenger. It seemed to him an outrage; but she fixed her eyes on him, and they had a haughty, challenging look. She was daring him to deny that the course she meant to take was warranted. He was furiously angry, but he tried to be just, and he knew that she would not go too far.

"It seems you do not approve!" she said.

Walthew felt a thrill. In a sense, she had admitted that his good opinion was worth something; but he saw that he must be careful. She was proud and had the fiery Spanish temperament. He might lose her by a hint of doubt.

"No," he said, "I don't approve; but I can conquer my prejudices, as you must have done. It is hateful to think of a woman's doing such work, but one must admire the courage that has helped you to undertake it. I dare say the cause demands the sacrifice."

The girl's expression softened, and she smiled as she turned to the priest.

"Do you not think Señor Walthew has answered well?"

"It is obvious that he has tact, and I think he has feeling," said Father Agustin. "But has he not some news for us, perhaps?"

"I have," said Walthew. "I want your help."

He began with the arrival of Evelyn's message, and Blanca started as if about to speak, but Father Agustin stopped her by a sign. Her face grew intent as Walthew told how they had driven the *Enchantress* before the gale, and her eyes sparkled when he deprecatingly related the struggle on the beach.

"I think you have no reason to apologize," she said. "They must have sent a strong guard, and you tried to rescue your friend alone. Miguel was right; there was nothing to be done by two or three men with knives." Then she paused with a thoughtful look. "It seems you do not know that Miss Cliffe is safe with us."

"It is a relief to learn that," Walthew said with feeling.

"Since she was at Rio Frio when she sent the note, it is plain that Gomez added the few lines that led you into the trap. But we must think how we can rescue Mr. Grahame. You suggest that the men who came with you from San Lucar have no plans?"

"No. They expected to gather a force on the way, but the peons had already gone off to join Don Martin. We meant to steal into Rio Frio and then see what could be done. All I know is that I'm not going back without my partner."

"We may find a way to set him free, but it will need some thought," Father Agustin remarked. "When a

thing looks difficult, force is not always the best means."

"It doesn't seem likely to be of much use now," Walthew gloomily agreed. "I'd six of your countrymen with me until I lost them, and we were told that Gomez was filling Rio Frio with soldiers. . . . But how did you come to take a part in this affair?"

Father Agustin's eyes twinkled.

"I came as duenna. You were surprised when you heard what the señorita had undertaken, but it appeared that my presence might be something of a protection and, perhaps, a guarantee. One concludes that this did not strike you."

Walthew looked embarrassed, but Father Agustin smiled.

"You look as if you need refreshment," he said. "We will have our supper now."

When the meal was finished, Father Agustin kept Walthew talking while Blanca leaned back silently in her chair. Her look was strained, and once Walthew surprised her cautious glance at the clock.

"I had forgotten the despatch-carrier," he said with some sharpness. "He doesn't seem to be coming."

"There is another road; longer and at present dangerous," explained Father Agustin. "We have had it watched, but this is the obvious way for a messenger to take."

"For all that," said Walthew steadily, "I hope the fellow will choose the other."

Neither of them answered. Blanca lay back in her chair; the priest sat with one elbow on the table, his cheek resting on his upturned palm. He was very tired.

Walthew studied him for a moment and then put his thoughts into words.

"It is curious, Father Agustin, that whenever I have met you things began to happen."

"It is possible. Perhaps a priest is most needed where there is trouble, and my mission is not always peace. One looks forward to the time when lust and greed and cruelty shall no longer rule the hearts of men, but it has not come yet."

Walthew lighted the cigarette his host passed over to him. Though Father Agustin had told him nothing new and his manner was by no means dramatic, he felt impressed. The quiet priest in his shabby cassock and clumsy, raw-hide shoes, had somehow a dominating personality. It was hard to tell what part he took in the revolution, but even if it were not directly active, Walthew thought him a moral force that must be reckoned with.

For a time nothing was said. There was no sound in the room except the ticking of the clock, and it seemed to Walthew that the house had a deserted feeling; he imagined that there was nobody in it except themselves. He grew angry and pitiful by turns as he glanced at Blanca. It was a hateful task she had been given, but he saw that she meant to carry it out. He wanted to get on, because Grahame might be in danger, but he could not leave until the despatch-carrier came. One could trust Father Agustin, but Walthew felt that he must be on hand.

It got cooler, and a faint, earthy smell crept in through the windows. Now and then the lamp flickered in a passing draught, and once or twice they forced themselves to talk, but the effort was obvious

and the voices presently died away. After this the quietness became oppressive, and by degrees Walthew grew drowsy. Rousing himself, he felt ashamed as he glanced at the girl. She did not move, but her pose was tense, and he knew that she was watchful. He resented the craving for sleep when she was bearing a heavy strain, but he had traveled fast since he left the lagoon and his exhausted body demanded rest.

He would not give in, and at last he started as a faint throbbing sound reached him from outside. It came from a long way off, but grew plainer, and he saw Father Agustin lean forward. Then Blanca stood up with a tinge of color in her face and a tightening of her lips. Somebody was riding hard down the road. There was a shout and a sharp answer.

For a few moments the three stood waiting with forced calm, and then a man hurriedly entered.

"Pepe is here, señor," he announced.

"Ah!" said Father Agustin quietly. "Bring him in." He turned to Walthew. "It is one of our men who watched the other road. Something has gone wrong."

Walthew saw Blanca's expression change. Although she had meant to get the despatches, he knew she felt relieved.

Pepe entered. His face was wet with perspiration and he spoke with a breathless quickness that prevented Walthew's following what he said. Still, it was plain that his news was bad, for his manner was apologetic, and Father Agustin looked thoughtful.

"Wait outside; we may want you," he said and turned to Walthew after dismissing the fellow. "The messenger must have been suspicious and our men

have blundered. It was very dark and he came upon them suddenly. One was shot as he seized the mule and the messenger escaped before they could mount, but he was forced to turn back."

"Could he pass them by making a round?"

"It is not likely. There is this road and the other, with thick forest between, and both are guarded. The man must wait for daylight, and I do not think he will reach Rio Frio. We may turn this to your advantage, but it needs thought."

He sat down and lighted a cigarette, and Walthew waited in silence until he looked up.

"It is possible that Gomez will offer your comrade his liberty in exchange for information he can use against Don Martin."

"Grahame will give him none," Walthew answered emphatically.

"Then I imagine he is in some danger. You would take a risk to rescue him?"

"Of course!"

"Very well. Gomez is waiting for instructions and probably knows that the messenger is a foreigner. I suggest that you impersonate him. The guards will let you pass, and Gomez will, no doubt, receive you alone. Then you must try to extort an order for your friend's release."

"I'm a pretty good shot," said Walthew meaningly. "I might get him covered before I begin."

Father Agustin made a sign of impatience.

"Your best argument will be this—if you are detained for more than a few minutes, there will be a tumult in the town. Gomez will hesitate about forcing a rising before he gets his orders. Then as soon as

you enter the house some of our people will find an excuse for loitering about the door. The soldiers are not well drilled; it might not be difficult to surprise and disarm the sentry, and then the house could be seized. For all that, there is a risk. Success will depend upon your nerve and coolness."

"I can't think of any better plan," said Walthew.

Blanca gave him a quick glance, and he thrilled as he saw a hint of trouble in her face. He thought she was unwilling that he should run into danger, but the next moment her eyes sparkled.

"It will work!" she said. "I am coming to help!"

Walthew made a sign of protest, but she would not let him speak.

"I promised to get the despatches, and the messenger may arrive while you are with Gomez. Then somebody must make arrangements for the door to be watched, and I am known in Rio Frio. I can find trustworthy men." She raised her hand imperiously. "You need not object, señor. I am going!"

Walthew was forced to acquiesce, and an hour afterward they left the *hacienda* and rode through the dark bush with two well-armed men behind them.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE PRESIDIO

THE sun hung low in the western sky, with a peak of the black cordillera cutting its lower edge, and Rio Frio shone in the glaring light. Seen from the road across the valley, the town had an ethereal look, for the tiers of square, white houses rose from a gulf of shadow and clustered upon the hillside, glimmering with a pearly luster, picked out by clumps of green. Behind were barren slopes, deepening in color to dusky purple as they ran back to the foot of the mountain wall.

Walthew pulled up his mule and sat gazing at the town. He had been riding beside Blanca, while Father Agustin and two others followed at some distance.

"Five minutes ago you could hardly see the place against the background and now it glows as if it were lighted up inside," he remarked. "Looks more like an enchanted palace than a collection of adobe houses. One could imagine that some magician had suddenly conjured it up."

"I'm afraid there's not much enchantment in Rio Frio," Blanca answered. "It's very prosaic and rather dirty."

"Well, I don't know," said Walthew, looking boldly at her. "I'm not given to romantic sentiment, but

something very strange happened to me one night in your town. Must have been glamour in the air, for I've been a changed man ever since. You wouldn't expect a matter-of-fact American, who was on the hunt for money, to trail round the country trying to act like Garibaldi, unless he was bewitched."

Blanca smiled prettily.

"You have, at least, chosen to follow a great example, señor."

"I don't think I chose him," Walthew returned dryly. "I'd have looked for somebody easier."

"But you were free to give up the part if you found it too hard for you."

"No; that's the trouble. I wasn't free."

The girl knew that he was not talking at random to hide nervousness. There was an underlying gravity in his manner and she secretly thrilled to it. Although he still wore the dirty bandage and was dusty and unkempt, she thought he had a very gallant air. His eyes were bright and intent, and his thin face was very resolute. The faint smile with which he regarded her somehow emphasized his determined, highstrung look.

"Señor," she said, "it is better to aim high. Achievement is not everything; the effort counts, and it is a generous errand you go upon to-night. But we will talk of something else. Look; there is the house where I spent the only happy years I can remember, until my father heard the call of duty once more and obeyed. Higher up, you can see the green gap of the *alameda;* beyond it the church of San Sebastian." She paused for a moment with a shiver. "The white line beneath it is the top of the *presidio,* where Gomez lives. But

the light fades quickly, and now, see—everything has gone."

The sun had sunk behind the cordillera, and the white town, changing suddenly to gray, melted out of sight as the shadows rolled up the hillside.

"You must see that it's enchanted," Walthew remarked. "The magician has waved his wand and blotted it out."

"It will shine again to-morrow," Blanca answered in a quiet voice. "The shadows have long rested on this country of ours, but one looks for the dawn."

The others were close behind them, but the party was smaller than it had been. Ragged men with dark, determined faces had been picked up on the way, but it would excite suspicion if they entered Rio Frio in a body, and they had separated during the last hour. Walthew did not know what their orders were, but he thought they would act upon some plan already made if he failed to secure Grahame's release; and Blanca presently bore this conclusion out.

"You will not be left unsupported, but it will be better if you can make Gomez set your comrade free without our help," she said. "We do not wish to strike the first blow to-night, but if it is needful, the *presidio* will be attacked. Gomez's position is like ours: he is not quite ready to force a conflict. You see how that strengthens your hand. He cannot altogether trust his soldiers, and a shot would rouse the town." Her voice sounded rather strained as she concluded: "But if you are careful, the shot will not be fired. Gomez is cruel, but he is a coward, and will give way if you use moral force."

"It's a big thing," Walthew answered thoughtfully.

"Still, I must put it over somehow. I have to get my partner out."

Darkness fell before they reached Rio Frio, and Blanca stopped her mule on the outskirts of the town.

"We must separate here," she said. "I do not think the entrance is carefully guarded, because it is not Gomez's policy to admit that an attack is possible, but there may be spies, and a *rural* or two on watch." She paused and held out her hand. "I wish you good fortune, señor, and I do not think your nerve will fail, but if the worst comes, we will not leave you in Gomez's power."

Walthew, bending down, kissed her hand and then lifted his hat.

"Until I see you again, señorita," he said and quietly rode on.

There was no moon and the air was still. The town rose before him, vague and shadowy, with a faint musky smell drifting out from it. As he reached the first of the houses, a wave of heat, rising from the rough pavement, surrounded him. The walls looked blank, for there were no lights behind the lattices, but a ray of brightness fell across the street a short distance in front. As he crossed the illuminated strip a man in white uniform stepped forward and seized his bridle.

"Who comes?" he asked, looking hard at Walthew's face.

"A messenger for the *secretario*."

"Pass, friend," said the other, letting go the bridle.

Walthew rode on, but checked the mule as soon as he was out of sight. It looked as if he had been expected, but he had been warned that he must give

the revolutionaries time to communicate with their friends in the city. They might have some trouble in entering it, although he believed they meant to do so through the house of some sympathizer on the outskirts. When he turned a corner he stopped to listen, but heard nothing behind him, and the street in front was quiet. It seemed that nobody had been sent to announce his arrival, and he could proceed slowly without rousing suspicion.

Leaving the direct line, he wound in and out through narrow streets, the mule's shoes clanging on the hot stones. He passed one or two dimly lighted cafés where men, roused by the clatter, looked up, their figures showing indistinct about the small tables between the pillars. Farther on, shadowy groups were sitting close together on the pavement, and though their voices were quiet they had somehow an air of excitement. Men appeared and vanished in the gloom, moving softly and quickly, as if afraid of loitering. There was a mysterious hint of tension about all that Walthew saw, and he felt his heart beat as he rode on.

Crossing the plaza, he dismounted at the hotel he had previously visited, and sent for the majordomo when the hostler grumbled something about the stable's being full.

"You will remember me," he said. "I want to leave my mule here and perhaps spend the night."

"I am sorry, but we have no room; there are a number of strangers in the town. They are not so full at the Golden Fleece."

"I'd rather stay here if I have to wait until tomorrow," Walthew answered. "You take care of the mules well, and I may have a long ride. Then one

puts up at a place one knows, with more—confidence."

The majordomo looked hard at him.

"We must try to make room, señor, since you have —confidence."

"Exactly," said Walthew, smiling. "Now I want the mule fed but not unsaddled. I may perhaps need it in an hour, and it would be an advantage if you could find me another."

"It might be possible," the majordomo replied in a thoughtful tone. "Still, there are spies about and they may watch this house. With permission, I will send the mule to Ramon Silva in the *calle Pinastro*. He is a carrier, and it is known that he buys pack-animals; he will have both mules ready, if you ask for them with confidence."

Walthew thanked the man and set off for the *presidio*. It was a long, square-fronted building with a sentry-box at the entrance, and an untidy soldier sat smoking outside. Another stood a little farther on in a slouching attitude, a rifle raking across his shoulder and his *kepis* tilted to one side. Discipline is seldom marked among Spanish-American soldiers, but Walthew was somewhat surprised to note that the fellow was bantering a group of loiterers. They were dressed like peons, and one carried a tray of sweetmeats and another a quantity of cigarettes, apparently for sale. As Walthew passed, the former hurriedly moved his tray, as if to prevent its being upset.

"Be careful, señor!" he exclaimed, giving Walthew a warning glance.

Walthew understood it. The men were not there by accident, and he saw that one was within leaping

distance of the sentry. He knew that the Spanish knife is almost as dangerous as the rifle at close quarters; and can, moreover, be thrown a short distance with effect.

"I have a message for the *secretario,*" he told the sentry with a careless air.

The man let him pass, and he saw that he was expected when a dusky steward met him at the door. Since the despatch-carrier was known to be a foreigner, it was easy to enter the *presidio,* but he wondered what would happen before he left. Now that the dangerous game was about to begin, he clearly recognized the risk he ran. For all that, it looked as if he held the trump cards, and he hoped that he had nerve enough to play them well. Pulling himself together, he followed his guide across the *patio* and up an outer stair, until the man stopped and knocked at a door.

"The messenger, señor," he announced.

Walthew held his breath until he heard the door shut behind him; then he turned to Gomez, who had risen from his seat at a table. It was a small room and the table stood between the men. Walthew felt his nerves tingle and his skin grow damp with perspiration as Gomez looked at him. There was surprise in the secretary's face and he seemed puzzled, as if he were trying to revive a memory.

"You are not the man we were told would come, but I think I have seen you somewhere," he said.

Walthew stood still, his hand in his jacket pocket, as if about to take the despatches from it.

"The other messenger was detained, but we have met. I once dined at your table at the International, in Havana."

Gomez gave him a quick, suspicious glance.

"Then there is something I do not understand, but it is not important now. You bring the President's orders?"

"No; I bring this."

He took his hand from his pocket and the barrel of an automatic pistol glinted in the light.

Gomez flinched, but recovered his calm with a quickness that showed Walthew he had a dangerous antagonist.

"Push your chair back from that open drawer and then keep still!" he ordered.

Gomez obeyed, and Walthew sat down on the edge of the table, where, if necessary, he could spring up more quickly than from a chair. Besides, the position helped him to keep both Gomez and the door in sight.

"You are uselessly dramatic, señor," Gomez remarked with a forced sneer. "You dare not use the pistol, and I am not to be frightened by so cheap a trick."

Walthew did not put down the weapon.

"Rather stale, but it has served its purpose by stopping you from calling out, and that's all I wanted to begin with. Now I'm going to show you how we stand."

"Your position strikes me as very weak."

"Well," said Walthew coolly, "I don't know. There are some chances in my favor."

"Not many, I think. A shot or a call from me would lead to your immediate arrest."

Walthew lowered the pistol.

"I'm not going to shoot and you won't call. One of your sentries is smoking cigarettes, with a wiry libera-

tor ready to put his knife into him, and something would happen to the other before he could throw up his rifle. Then, a number of my friends are waiting to seize the gate."

"What would they gain? They could not hold the building. In a few minutes the soldiers would arrive."

"Just so. Still, they'd have a few minutes, and there's reason for believing they're not fond of you. Then, I don't mean to be made a prisoner and, if I'm forced to, I'll shoot straight."

This was not an idle threat. Walthew's nerves were steady, and he felt a rancorous hatred of the man. He had been guilty of unspeakable cruelties, he had carried off an American girl, and he now had Grahame in his power. Walthew's face was pale, but his lips were firmly set, and there was an ominous gleam in his eyes. Gomez began to grow uneasy.

"However," Walthew went on, "the important point is that the first shot starts the revolution. My friends won't have much trouble with the sentries at the door, but if your soldiers try to break in afterward, it will rouse the town. You may take this for granted, because you must see that I'd make sure of being supported outside before I ventured here."

Gomez pondered. The American's position was certainly strong. The lad was not a rash fool, and his having made the venture proved his statement about the likelihood of a revolution to be correct; moreover, Gomez had other reasons for not questioning it. As he looked up, Walthew made a warning gesture and Gomez heard footsteps outside.

"Don't move!" said Walthew in a low, tense voice. "If that fellow comes in it will make trouble for both

of us. You'd better think how you're going to keep him out!"

The secretary's lips twitched, but he sat motionless. The steps drew nearer, echoing down the passage; in another moment the man outside would reach the door. Walthew held his breath; but the steps continued and passed. Then they grew fainter, and Walthew saw his antagonist's pose relax; the strain had told on him. Gomez was weakening and the game was nearly won.

"What do you want?" the secretary asked.

"An order for Grahame's release."

"Impossible! My signature would make me responsible to the President."

"You'll take a bigger responsibility if you refuse; the men I left waiting will begin the trouble if I'm not outside very soon. You haven't got your master's orders yet, and the liberators have headed his messenger off. I guess you'll have to answer for it if you spoil his plans. Remember you'll have to face a revolution unless you let Grahame out."

Gomez was silent for a few moments and then made a sign of acquiescence.

"Very well," he said, and pulling his chair to the table began to write. Then he gave Walthew the paper. "Are you satisfied?"

"Not quite," said Walthew, glancing over the message. "Ring for one of your men and send it off with this note." He handed both papers to Gomez. "Order him to deliver them at once!"

When the man came in, Walthew was sitting carelessly in a chair, as if nothing unusual had been going on. His right hand, however, was gripping the pistol in his jacket pocket.

"I'll wait here for five minutes to give him a start. Seems to me that would be safer," he said when the orderly had left them.

He was relieved when he thought he could get up, for the strain had been heavy, and he was feeling rather limp, but he walked steadily to the door and did not quicken his steps until he reached the stairs. It was with tingling nerves that he came to the outer gate; but the sentries let him pass, and when he had gone a short distance, three or four peons who were hanging about turned and followed him. He was outside in the friendly darkness, but he had still to leave the town.

CHAPTER XXX

THE ESCAPE

WALTHEW waited for the peons, and then turned toward *calle Pinastro,* where he had arranged to meet Grahame. He had now three companions whom he thought he could trust, but they were unarmed, except for their knives. Gomez had sent the order for Grahame's release, but if he could rearrest him and seize Walthew without causing a tumult, he would do so. They had only five or six minutes' start. It did not look as if they could get out of the town in time, and Walthew felt fiercely impatient. For all that, he stopped at the corner of a street when one of the others touched him.

There was a lighted café near by, and a girl stood on the pavement near its open front. She was dressed very plainly in white, with a dark shawl fastened round her head, like a peasant girl, but he felt a sudden thrill as she turned toward him. Although he could not see her very well, he knew it was Blanca. When he cautiously crossed the street she drew him back into the shadow, but he saw her look of relief.

"You have succeeded!" she said softly. "Where is Mr. Grahame?"

"I am to meet him at Ramon Silva's."

"You cannot go this way; there are two *rurales* farther on. But it would be dangerous to turn back now."

She put her hand on his arm, as if to detain him while she considered what to do, and Walthew looked about, knowing that he could trust her knowledge of the town. The street was narrow and dark except where the light from the café shone across it. A few citizens sat round the small tables, and several shadowy figures loitered in the gloom outside. Walthew thought they had come with the girl, but there was nothing in their attitude to suggest that they had any particular business in the neighborhood, and his own followers had stopped at the corner.

Suddenly a clatter of hoofs broke out. Some one was riding fast toward them. Walthew felt Blanca's hand tighten warningly on his arm as she drew back a pace or two. The sound grew louder; there was a hoarse shout like a sentry's challenge, and an answer which Walthew imagined satisfied the *rurales* on guard; and then a mounted man rode into the stream of light.

The mule was foul with sweat and dust, and a trickle of blood ran down its shoulder; the rider's face was pale and set. Walthew's eyes rested on him for only a second, but he knew the fellow was English or American. There was an angry cry in the background, and a stealthy figure, outlined against a blank, white wall, crossed the street. The mounted man was obviously the President's messenger; but Walthew, having seen his grim, tired look, and the way he drove the worn-out mule furiously down the street, felt a touch of half-admiring sympathy. After all, the fel-

low was white, and was gallantly doing what he had undertaken.

A moment more and Walthew saw something glisten in the hand of the stealthy figure that seemed ready to spring. He was only a yard away and, acting on impulse, he stumbled as if by accident and fell against the man. The knife dropped with a jingle, and the messenger dashed past, throwing Walthew a quick glance as he went.

An angry murmur broke out, and several of the loiterers closed in on Walthew, while men left the café to see what was going on, and there were quick footsteps farther off in the gloom. Remembering the need for haste and that Grahame might be in danger, Walthew half regretted his rashness, but as he wondered what to do Blanca ran to his side.

"The *rurales* are coming!" she shouted; and the men about them vanished as she led him away.

They turned a corner into a lane between dark houses.

"Why did you interfere?" she asked breathlessly.

"I don't know. Felt I had to," Walthew answered with some embarrassment.

"But you know who he is!"

"Yes; he's carrying the despatches. Still, he looked played out and he had got through."

"Through your friends!"

"I suppose so. It didn't seem to make much difference. Guess I've been foolish."

"You were generous, but generosity of that kind must be paid for," Blanca answered in a hard tone. "It will cost our people something, and, now that

Gomez has got his orders, I don't know that we can leave the town."

"Grahame and I must find a way. But you'd be safer without us. I can't let you run into needless danger."

Blanca laughed.

"Do you think I would leave you to get into fresh difficulties? With a temperament like yours, you're not to be trusted alone."

"I handled Gomez pretty well," Walthew boasted.

"And you still wear the bandage he saw you with! Is it safe to take it off?"

"I'd forgotten it," he admitted.

He threw the bandage into the lane with some annoyance, for the girl seemed amused, but she made no remark until they reached a quiet street.

"Well," she said, "perhaps I can excuse you to the others, who haven't deserted us. But we turn down here and you had better go a few yards in front."

Following the directions she gave him, he presently crossed a square and entered a street where a dim light burned. A man stood near it in a careless pose, smoking a cigarette, and Walthew's heart beat fast as he saw him.

"Grahame!" he said; and the next moment he was shaking his comrade's hand.

"Got your note," said Grahame. "Thought I'd better wait here. Silva can't let us have the mules."

Walthew understood his brevity: there was no time for questions and explanations.

Grahame took off his hat as Blanca joined them.

"I must see Silva. Wait in the shadow," she said, and moved quickly away.

The men stood silent. They had much to say, but it would keep, and the means of escaping from the town occupied their minds. The street was deserted and seemed strangely quiet after the girl's footsteps died away, but indistinct cries came across the flat roofs as if something were happening. Walthew looked about sharply in tense impatience, but could see nothing, and Blanca did not return. At last, however, she came silently toward them through the gloom.

"It is impossible for Silva to give us the mules," she said. "The Government has seized all he has, and two *rurales* guard the stable."

"Then we must try to get away on foot," Grahame replied. "Would you be safer, señorita, if you got some of your friends to hide you?"

"No," she said; "I must take my father some news I have picked up, and Gomez will leave no place unsearched when he learns that I have been here. I think we shall be out of danger if we can reach a house I know."

They went down the street, quickly but silently, and as they turned the corner a man sprang out from the gloom beside a wall and immediately afterward disappeared. A few moments later they heard a whistle, and Blanca led the men into a narrow lane.

"It is off our way, and we must run!" she said.

She shook off Walthew when he tried to take her arm; and they had gone some distance before they heard footsteps behind them. The pursuers did not seem to gain much ground, but when they slipped round a corner somebody shouted, and the girl sped across the square they had entered. A little farther on, they heard a heavier tread on the uneven stones.

"*Rurales!*" Grahame whispered.

Blanca turned off quickly and led them through an archway into a street where there was a café, which, to Walthew's surprise, she made for. The pursuers had not come out from the archway yet, and the party, falling into a slower pace before they reached the café, went in and sat down calmly at one of the tables. As usual, the front of the café was open to the pavement, separated from it by only a row of pillars. A few men sat inside and glanced curiously at the newcomers, but they made no remark.

"A bottle of vermouth, as soon as you can!" Grahame said to the landlord.

The fellow gave him a quick glance, and then his eyes rested for a moment on the girl; but he did not delay, and was coming back with some glasses when several barefooted men and two others in uniform ran down the street. Grahame had taken up a newspaper, but he watched them over it without turning his head; Walthew pushed his chair back carelessly into the shadow; and Blanca played with a gaudy fan. The men did not look into the café, but the landlord, after quietly filling the glasses, put down the bottle with a meaning smile.

"They may come back," he said, and moved away.

Walthew was about to get up, but Blanca coquettishly tapped him with her fan and, taking the hint, he sat still; they must drink some of the vermouth before they left. He drained his glass, and insisted on refilling the girl's. Blanca protested laughingly, but Grahame saw that she held her fan so that it hid her face from the other customers. She was playing her part well. Still, he thought that Walthew, knowing

less of Spanish conventions, did not understand how daring she was. When Grahame's eyes rested on her she blushed and quickly turned her head.

"It seems you have a number of supporters in the town," he remarked in a low voice.

"Yes," she said; "you are thinking of the landlord's hint. We hope at least half the people are on our side. . . . But we can venture out in a minute or two."

She raised her glass, smiling at Walthew, and then hummed a song until she got up and, standing in front of a dirty mirror, began to arrange the black mantilla that covered her head. Her pose and movements were marked by rakish coquetry, and Grahame saw they had deceived the loungers; but he noticed with a touch of dry amusement that Walthew looked puzzled and not quite pleased.

"Now, señores," she said loudly in Castilian, "you have had wine enough and must not keep me waiting."

She went out in front of them, flaunting her fan, but when they reached the pavement her manner changed, and her voice was strained as she whispered:

"Follow me close, but quickly! There is no time to lose!"

They were not molested as they crossed the town, but when they neared its outskirts, Blanca left the road that led to the open country and plunged into a network of narrow streets. At last she stopped in front of a large but dilapidated looking house and, knocking twice, waited a few moments until her summons was answered. There was no light inside, and she exchanged a word with a half-seen person at the door before the party was admitted. The door was shut and bolted, and they were led into an inner room

where a small lamp burned, and a woman with a frightened face confronted them.

"The road is stopped, and you must go at once before the house is searched!" she said excitedly.

"Where are the others?" Blanca asked.

"They lost you and have gone on. You know where they will wait."

Blanca nodded and beckoned her companions; and they followed her and the woman to a window at the back. Grahame tactfully sprang out first and was relieved to find himself outside the town, with a grove of trees that promised safe concealment not far ahead. He made his way toward them without looking round. Walthew got out next, but as soon as he reached the ground he turned and held up his arms to Blanca, who was sitting on the ledge. As she sprang down he caught her, and holding her fast kissed her ardently. His feeling of triumph banished all thought of their danger when he found that she did not resist. Her eyes shone a deep, mystic blue, and she smiled as she slipped her arm round his neck for a moment before he set her down.

Without speaking, they hurried on after Grahame.

"We have about a mile to go," Blanca said, when they reached him.

She struck into a path that led them past clumps of trees, rows of neatly planted bushes, and fields of cane. It was a still, dark night on which a sound would carry far, but they heard no pursuit, and the town seemed quiet.

At last a small building loomed up ahead, and Blanca stopped beside it.

"We should find the others here," she whispered.

"But you wait. It would be better for them to see me first."

They let her go, knowing that she would be easily recognized; but she came back a few moments later.

"There is nobody about. Perhaps they have gone on, because they had news from people in the town, or something may have happened to make them change their plans."

Sitting down outside the building, they began to consider what must be done.

"We must go on without our mules," Blanca said. "I have information that my father must get as soon as possible; but we may not be able to join him until to-morrow night. The road is the nearest way, but now that Gomez has his orders he may have sent out soldiers to stop all travelers. Besides, there are *rurales* about."

"Then we'll take to the mountains," said Walthew. He did not mean her to run a risk. "I guess they've disarmed Grahame, and with one pistol among us we couldn't put up much of a fight."

"There's another," Blanca returned quietly. "I might let Mr. Grahame have it, if he is a good shot, but he must give it back to me; and, as time is important, we will take the road."

She silenced Walthew's objections and they set off, striking into a broad track some distance farther on. For a time, it wound, deep with dust that clung about their feet heavy with the dew, across a belt of cultivated land where indistinct, orderly rows of coffee bushes ran back from its edge. Then it plunged into thick forest, where the soil was soft and the dark-

ness impenetrable, and they stumbled along blindly, trying to feel their way. For all that, Grahame was conscious of keen satisfaction as he breathed the warm, night air. Heavy as it was, it seemed strangely invigorating after the foul atmosphere of the *carcel* where he had been imprisoned, and it was something to walk at large again. Walthew, however, felt anxious and limp. He had been highly strung for several hours, and he held himself responsible for the safety of the girl he loved. Listening for sounds of pursuit, he tried to pierce the darkness in front, and started when a leaf rustled or some animal moved stealthily through the forest. He thought his footsteps rang down the branch-arched track alarmingly loud.

They came out into barren, rolling country, where clumps of cactus and euphorbia grew in fantastic shapes. The track led upward, and it was obvious that Blanca was getting tired. Unless they are the wives of peons, Spanish-American women do not lead an active life and, as a rule, limit their walks to an evening stroll in the plaza.

For a while Blanca leaned on Walthew's arm, and he winced as he felt her limping movements, but at last she stopped.

"I cannot go much farther, but there is a house near here," she said. "We can rest when we reach it."

The house proved to be empty and in some disorder, suggesting that its occupants had hurriedly fled, but on searching it with a light they found some food, a little charcoal, and an iron cooking pot. Blanca and Walthew had made a long journey after their last

meal and Grahame had eaten nothing since his very plain breakfast at ten o'clock.

Following the girl's instructions, he lighted the charcoal and set the pot near the door while she prepared the food, but Walthew lay down in the dust outside. He was physically tired, and now, when he imagined they were comparatively safe, he felt very slack and his mind was dull. For all that, he lay where he could see the road, and only moved his eyes from it when he glanced into the small adobe building. The charcoal made a faint red glow that forced up the face of the stooping girl out of the darkness and touched her skin with a coppery gleam. Grahame knelt beside her, a dark, vaguely outlined figure, fanning the fire, and Walthew felt half jealous that he should help.

Then he found himself getting drowsy, and, lighting a cigarette, he fixed his eyes resolutely on the road. All was very quiet, and there was not a movement anywhere.

But Blanca was not out of danger yet.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE AMERICAN TRADER

WALTHEW was almost dozing, when he was startled by a sound that came out of the darkness. It was some distance off, but it had a regular beat in it, and when it grew louder he could not doubt that some one was riding fast up the road.

"Move the fire back—there's somebody coming!" he called quickly. "Blanca, will you give Grahame your pistol?"

He used her name for the first time, and it thrilled him, but he had other things to think about. The faint glow of the charcoal vanished, and Grahame came out and stood listening.

"Stay where you are and guard the door!" he said. "I'll drop behind that bush, and then if the fellow gets down we'll have him between us."

Throwing away a cigarette he was smoking, he vanished into the gloom, and Walthew lay still with his heart beating fast. The drumming of hoofs grew slower as the rider climbed the hill before the house, but Walthew could not see him until he dismounted and came up the path, leading his mule. It was some comfort to realize that they had only one man to deal with, but if he was a spy of the President's, he must not get away. Walthew, lying at full length, quickly

worked his elbow into the dust to steady his pistol hand.

When the stranger was three or four yards away he stopped and looped the bridle round his arm. Then he put his hand into his pocket, and Walthew, with his nerves a-tingle, supposed that the man was searching for a match. In another moment he might have to shoot, and he held his breath as his finger tightened on the trigger. He heard the match scrape, a tiny flame flickered between the stranger's hands, and Walthew started as he saw his face. It was the man who had carried the President's orders into Rio Frio.

The light spread, falling on Walthew's recumbent figure and sparkling on his pistol, but the messenger did not throw it down as the American had half expected. Instead, he coolly held it up.

"I see you have me covered," he said. "Though it's a surprise to find you here, I'm not going to run away."

Walthew lowered his pistol.

"Very well. Leave your mule and go into the house. Will you tie up the animal, Grahame?"

"So there are two of you!"

The man did as he was told, and Walthew, following him, asked Blanca to get a light.

The girl had found a lamp which she placed on the ground, and the stranger looked at her sharply as she bent over it. Nobody spoke until Grahame came in.

"Are you alone?" he asked the messenger.

"Quite."

"What's your name and business?"

"Carson, agent for the trading firm, Henniker and Gillatly."

"Where were you going and why did you come here?"

Carson turned to Walthew, who had been wondering whether he recognized him.

"I imagine this gentleman knows my business," he said. "He did me a service in Rio Frio which I'm glad to acknowledge. As a matter of fact, I stopped here to look for something to eat; the owner of this house is on the President's side. It's pretty plain, though, that he has cleared out. Taking it all round, I haven't had much luck this trip."

"Who warned you not to call at the *hacienda* Perez?" Blanca asked.

"I don't know his name—he stopped me for a moment in the dark. I'm sorry I had to put one of your friends out of action, señorita, but I hadn't much choice, because he struck at me with his knife. For all that, I hope the man's not badly hurt."

"We expect him to recover."

"You seem to know this lady," Walthew broke in.

Carson smiled.

"I haven't had the pleasure of being presented, but I've seen Miss Sarmiento once or twice, and it would be strange if I forgot her."

His easy good-humor disarmed Walthew.

"Did you deliver the President's despatches?" he asked.

"Yes. To tell the truth, I was glad to get rid of them—and I imagine Miss Sarmiento acted wisely in leaving the town. Now, however, I'm naturally curious to know what you mean to do with me."

"Will you give us your word not to tell any of the President's supporters that you have met us?"

"I'll promise with pleasure. I feel that I've done enough in carrying his despatches."

"Very well," said Grahame. "That clears the ground; but we must talk it over together."

"Thanks," Carson said coolly. "I'm not pressed for time—and I notice that you have been cooking. I wonder if I might ask for some supper?"

"All we have is at your service, señor," Blanca answered with Spanish politeness. "But we'd better put out the light."

She extinguished the lamp, and they gathered round the cooking pot, the men sitting on the earth floor with the red glow of the burning charcoal on their faces. It could not be seen many yards away, and Grahame's view commanded the path to the door. Blanca divided the omelette she had made, and afterward gave them some black coffee and a bundle of cigarettes.

"These are Habaneros and should be good," she said. "As they belong to a friend of the President's we need not hesitate about using them."

She sat down beside Walthew, and they smoked in silence for a while. Blanca was studying Carson's face as it was lighted by the glow from the charcoal.

"Why did you help Altiera?" she asked him suddenly.

"Commercial interest. He has given us one or two trading privileges. And he seemed to think I had a pretty good chance of getting through."

"Do you know what his orders to Gomez were?"

Grahame had wondered when she meant to ask this, and had left it to her, feeling that she was more likely to catch the messenger off his guard.

Carson laughed.

"Honestly, I don't know; Altiera isn't the man to take an outsider into his confidence."

"Still, you know something."

"Well," Carson said quietly, "I'm sorry I must refuse to tell you my surmises. No doubt you'll understand my obstinacy."

"Aren't you rash, señor?" Blanca asked in a meaning tone.

"On the whole, I think not. Of course, I'm in your hands, but as I've promised not to give you away, I expect these gentlemen won't take an unfair advantage of me. Then, from what I know about Don Martin, I feel that I can trust his daughter."

Blanca smiled.

"Well," she said, "I suppose we must let you go. You are at liberty to leave us when you wish."

Grahame and Walthew agreed, and Carson shook hands with them.

"It's evident that your only reason for stopping near Rio Frio is that Miss Sarmiento finds it impossible to walk any farther," he remarked. "She's welcome to my mule. Gomez requisitioned it from a man called Silva, who's suspected of sympathizing with your party. I believe I know where to find another animal."

They thanked him and let him go; and soon after he vanished into the darkness, Blanca mounted the mule and they set off again.

Pushing on until dawn, they found a small, deserted *hacienda* standing back from the road, and as tall forest grew close up to it, offering a line of retreat, they decided to rest there. The mule looked jaded.

Blanca admitted that she could not go much farther, and Walthew was obviously worn out. They could find nothing to eat; but there was some furniture in the house, and Blanca found a place to sleep in one of the rooms, while the men lay down on a rug outside. The sun was now rising above the high cordillera and, wet with the dew as they were, they enjoyed the warmth. A few lizards crept about the wall in front of them, and an archway near by commanded a view of the road. The building was in good order, and had apparently been abandoned on the approach of the President's soldiers.

"These people know what to expect; they must have been ready to light out," Walthew remarked. "I rather liked that fellow Carson, but it's curious he didn't ask us anything about our business."

"He'd take it for granted that we had an active part in the revolution."

"No doubt the señorita's being with us would suggest something of the kind, but he seemed surprised at first," Walthew replied with a thoughtful air. "For all that, I can't quite see——"

"No," said Grahame; "I don't think you altogether understand the situation yet. I suppose you mean to marry Miss Sarmiento?"

"Certainly, if she'll have me," Walthew answered with firmness, though he looked at his comrade as if he expected something more.

Grahame smiled.

"Then you're to be congratulated, because you won't have much trouble in getting your wish."

"What do you mean?" Walthew's tone was sharp, but he remembered an incident during his escape from

the town. "I'll admit I wasn't quite hopeless, but we were both in danger——"

He broke off, and Grahame regarded him with a friendly laugh.

"You're modest—and you're more ignorant of Spanish customs than I thought. However, I'd better explain, so you'll know how Don Martin will look at it. To begin with, a well-brought-up girl is never permitted to meet a man unless she is suitably escorted by an older member of the family, and you have been wandering about with Miss Sarmiento for two or three days. Now you can understand why Carson was surprised, and I noticed he was uncertain how to address Miss Sarmiento at first. She noticed his hesitation, though you did not."

For some moments Walthew was silent, his brows knitted.

"No, I never thought of it," he admitted. "But we'll say no more about it until I've seen Don Martin. Besides, there's another matter. A fellow who joined us at the lagoon gave me a letter for you. Sorry I forgot it until now, but I had a good deal to think about."

"I don't suppose it's important," Grahame replied, and lighted a cigarette before opening the envelope with an English stamp.

Then his expression changed, and a few moments afterward he let the letter drop and sat very still. The cigarette went out, the hot sun shone upon his uncovered head, and a lizard ran across his leg; but he did not move. He seemed lost in thought. Walthew, watching with puzzled sympathy, waited for him to speak.

"This letter has been a long time on the way," he explained at last. "It probably had to wait at our Havana address, and then Don Martin's people had no opportunity to deliver it."

"But what's the news?" Walthew asked.

Grahame answered with a strained laugh.

"In a sense, it's rather a grim joke. While I've been risking my life for a few dollars' profit on smuggled guns, and practicing the sternest self-denial, it seems I've been the owner of an old Border estate."

"Ah!" said Walthew. "Then Calder Hall now belongs to you?"

"What do you know about Calder Hall?"

"I've known all about it for some time, and I'm very glad. But I understand that you didn't expect to inherit the estate."

"No; it seemed impossible. I won't trouble you with family particulars, but two deaths have occurred in a very short time. The last owner was no older than I am and married, but his only child is a girl, and he was killed while hunting. Although he was my cousin, I've rarely seen him."

He was silent again for some minutes, his mind busy with alluring visions. He had long struggled with poverty, and had wandered about the world engaging in reckless adventures, but he had inherited a love for the old home of his race; and now it was his. But this, while counting for much, was not the main thing. He had been strongly attracted by Evelyn Cliffe, but, recognizing his disadvantages, he had tried hard to hold in check the love for her which grew in spite of him. The obstacles that had bulked so large were now removed. He was free to win her

if he could, and it was comforting to remember that in her urgent need she had sent for him. But he had work to finish first.

"I suppose you mean to start home as soon as you can?" Walthew suggested.

"No," Grahame answered quietly, "I'm not going yet. For one thing, we have taken Don Martin's money, and now that he has to meet a crisis we can't leave him in the lurch. Besides, one day at San Lucar, we promised some of the leaders of the movement that we'd see them through."

It was a good reason. Grahame was not the man to do a shabby thing, but Walthew, remembering that Evelyn was with the rebels, thought his comrade had a stronger motive for staying.

"Well," he agreed, "I guess that's so. Anyway, the game can't last much longer; they'll have to use our guns in the next few days."

"Yes; and as we don't know what part we'll have in it, you'd better get some rest. I'll keep watch a while."

Walthew was glad of the opportunity to sleep; and Grahame, moving back into the shadow as the sun got hot, sat still, with his mind busy and his eyes fixed upon the road.

At noon Blanca came out of the house and stood looking down at Walthew with a compassionate gentleness that she did not try to hide. The half-healed cut showed plainly on his forehead, his brown face looked worn, and he lay in an attitude of deep weariness.

"It is a pity to wake him, but we must start," she said, and indicated the scar. "I suppose you can guess

that he has borne something, and he got that wound for you."

"I'm not likely to forget it," Grahame answered quietly.

"No," Blanca said with a curious smile. "You do not make many protestations, you men of the North, but one can trust you."

She stooped and touched Walthew gently.

"It is noon and we must go."

Her voice was quiet, but Walthew seemed to know it in his sleep, for he sprang to his feet with a half-ashamed air.

"I didn't mean to sleep so long," he said, and looked at Blanca anxiously. "Have you rested enough? Are you quite fit to travel?"

Blanca smiled; and when Walthew brought up the mule and helped her to mount she noticed something new in his manner. Hitherto, it had been marked by a certain diffidence, but now this had gone. He was assiduously careful of her, but with a hint of proprietary right. Something had happened since she had last seen him to account for the change. She gave Grahame a searching glance, but his face was impassive.

They set off, Walthew walking beside the mule, but it was to Grahame that the girl spoke as they moved slowly forward in the scorching heat. He thought he understood, and his eyes twinkled with amusement when she was not looking. Blanca suspected him, and she did not mean Walthew to take too much for granted.

CHAPTER XXXII

LOVE'S VISION

IT was late when Walthew led Blanca's mule through the rebel camp to the table under a tree where Don Martin sat writing. There was a half moon in the sky, and as they passed between the rows of motionless, dark figures stretched on the ground, here and there an upturned face caught the light and shone a livid white. In places a sentry's form was silhouetted, vague and black, against the sky, but except for this all was wrapped in puzzling shadow, and silence brooded over the camp.

One of Don Martin's staff sat beside the table, smoking a cigarette, another lay asleep near by, but a small lamp burned steadily near the leader's hand, lighting up his grave face against the gloom. He put down his pen and waited when Walthew stopped the mule and helped the girl to dismount.

"I have had the honor of escorting the señorita from Rio Frio, where with her help I got my partner out of the *carcel,*" he said.

"Yes," Don Martin returned in a quiet voice, "I have heard something of this. I am told that you met my daughter at the *hacienda* Perez. Was it by accident?"

Walthew, remembering Grahame's remarks on the

subject, felt embarrassed, for the steadiness of Don Martin's glance was significant.

"Certainly!" he answered. "I had never heard of the *hacienda* before I reached it. For all that, I would not have kept away if I had known the señorita was there."

"One must acknowledge your frankness," Don Martin remarked. "Well, what happened afterward?"

Walthew looked at Blanca, but she seemed to be smiling as she unfolded her fan, and he began a brief account of their adventures.

"And your comrade is with you?" asked Don Martin. "I was told of his escape, but you have been some time on the way. Our friends who lost you in Rio Frio arrived this morning."

Blanca laughed.

"I cannot walk like a peon," she explained.

"But you came on a mule!"

"We had gone some distance when Carson, the trader, lent it to us."

Walthew had not mentioned their meeting with the President's messenger, and Don Martin looked surprised.

"Carson!" he exclaimed. "If I did not believe Mr. Grahame was a man of honor, I should not know what to think."

"Mr. Walthew also is a man of honor," Blanca retorted in a meaning tone. "But I have news which you must hear at once."

Don Martin turned to Walthew.

"You will give me a few minutes; then I will see you again."

Taking this as a dismissal, Walthew went back to

where Grahame was waiting and smoked a cigarette with him. Soon after he had finished it, a drowsy soldier beckoned him and he returned to Sarmiento. When he reached the table Blanca had gone.

"Señor," he said, "I have a favor to ask; but the accident that I was thrown into Miss Sarmiento's company at the *hacienda* and Rio Frio has nothing to do with it. You must understand that. I want your consent to my marriage to your daughter."

"Ah!" said Don Martin. "You have learned that she is willing?"

Walthew felt half guilty when he thought of the kiss beneath the window-sill, but he looked at Don Martin steadily.

"I thought it better to follow your customs," he explained. "Blanca does not know I meant to ask you. But I want to say that my mind has been made up for some time. It was for her sake that I determined to stay on the coast and give you all the help I could."

There was a gleam of amusement in Don Martin's eyes.

"Then my daughter gained us a useful ally. But, so far, you have spoken for yourself. What about your parents? Blanca Sarmiento is not an American."

Walthew hesitated for a moment.

"They may feel some surprise, but I believe it will vanish when they have seen her; and I choose my wife to please myself. I think I have means enough to make my way without any help, though I haven't a great deal."

"How much?"

Sarmiento nodded when Walthew told him.

"It is enough; you would be thought a rich man in

this country. Still, I would prefer to have your father's consent. It is our custom that a marriage should be arranged with the approval of both families."

"But you are a progressive and don't count much on customs. I understand that you mean to cut out all those that stop your people from going ahead."

"It is true to some extent," Don Martin admitted with a smile. "For all that, one may believe in progress in the abstract, and yet hesitate about making risky experiments that touch one's own family. However, if Blanca is willing, I can trust her to you."

"I'll try to deserve your confidence," Walthew answered, and added with a naïvely thoughtful air: "My people will come round; the only thing they'll insist on is that I enter the family business, and that's going to be easier than I thought."

"Why did you refuse in the beginning?"

"It's rather hard to explain. I wanted to get into touch with realities, to learn what I was good for and find my proper level."

Sarmiento made a sign of comprehension.

"And in searching for what you call realities, you have found yourself."

Walthew recognized the truth of this. It was not that in facing danger and hardship he had gained steadiness and self-control, because he had never lacked courage, but he had acquired a clearer conception of essential things. He would no longer be content to accept thoughtlessly the conventional view. His comrade had taught him much by his coolness in time of strain and his stubborn tenacity when things went wrong. It was not for nothing that Grahame

had hawk-like eyes: he had the gift of seeing what must be done. But, after all, it was from hardship itself that Walthew had learned most, and in the light of that knowledge he determined to go home. The work he was best fitted for was waiting in the smoky, industrial town; it was not the task he had longed for, but it was his, and he would be content now.

Don Martin smiled.

"You may try to persuade Blanca to go with you to your country, if you wish. I want a talk with your comrade now. Will you send him to me?"

Walthew left him with a light heart, and shortly afterward Grahame joined Don Martin.

"Señor," said the leader, "you have kept your agreement with us faithfully, and I do not know that we have any further claim, but I understand that you do not mean to leave us yet."

"No," Grahame replied quietly; "I shall see you through."

"Good! Another body of our friends is gathering at a village to which I will send you with a guide. They are well armed and determined. I offer you command."

"Where is the señorita Cliffe?" Grahame wanted to know.

"At a *hacienda* two or three hours' ride back. She is in good hands, and at daybreak my daughter leaves to join her."

Grahame was sensible of keen disappointment.

"When do you wish me to start?" he asked.

"As soon as possible; but you'd better take an hour's rest."

"I'm ready now if you will give me my orders."

When, a few minutes later, he rode away with the guide, Walthew and Blanca left the camp and followed a path that led through a field of rustling sugar-cane.

"We must not go far," Blanca protested. "This is quite against my people's idea of what is correct."

"It's a sign of the change you're going to make for me. You might have been something like a princess here, and you'll be the wife of a plain American citizen, instead."

"I never wanted to be a princess," she said; "and certainly not a conspirator. All I really hoped for was one faithful subject."

"You have one whose loyalty won't change. But you mustn't expect too much, because I'm giving up my adventurous career and turning business man. Men like Bolivar and the other fellow you wanted me to copy aren't born every day—and I'm not sure we'd appreciate them if they were."

Blanca laughed.

"You are a pessimist, but I will tell you a secret. It needs courage to be the wife of a great soldier and I am not brave enough." Her voice fell to a low, caressing note. "One's heart shrinks from sending the man one loves into danger."

Walthew stopped in the path and faced the girl. She was smiling. The half-moon, now high overhead, shed its beams down in a weird light that lay over everything like a mantle of blue silver. All about them the tall cane whispered in the wind.

Walthew opened his arms, and Blanca cuddled to him.

"It is so wonderful!" he breathed, after the first

long kiss. "So wonderful that you are really going back to the States with me!"

"You are not going back the same," she smiled up at him; and he stooped and kissed the smile.

"——You have seen the vision," she finished; "romance has touched you."

"It was you who opened my eyes. Perhaps now they are dazzled; but we will never let the vision quite fade. Romance shall spread her bright wings above the home I'm going to build you on the river bluff——"

Again he found her mouth, and drank deep.

The silence was broken by a rattle of leather and a jingle of steel that startled them, and as they turned quickly and walked up the path a dark figure rose out of the gloom ahead and stood before them, sinister and threatening. When Walthew had answered the sentry's challenge, Blanca shivered.

"I had forgotten for a few minutes," she said. "Rio Frio is not taken yet, and you must fight for us."

"For two or three days, if all goes well. It can't be a long struggle. Rio Frio is bound to fall."

Blanca clung closer to him.

"I cannot keep you," she said; "but how I wish the days were over! There is nothing of the princess in me; I am only an anxious girl."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE HERO OF RIO FRIO

DAY was breaking when Cliffe saw Rio Frio loom out above low-lying mist. There was no perceptible light in the sky, but the scattered clumps of trees were growing blacker and more distinct, and the town began to stand out against a dusky background. It had an unsubstantial look, as if it might suddenly fade away, and Cliffe felt that he was doing something fantastic and unreal as he watched the blurred forms of his companions move on. To some extent, want of sleep and weariness accounted for this, because he had marched all night, but the silence with which the rebels advanced helped the illusion. A number of them were barefooted and the raw-hide sandals of the others made no sound in the thick dust.

Cliffe marched near the head of the straggling battalion, a cartridge-belt round his waist and a rifle on his shoulder. His light clothes were damp and stained with soil. His costly Panama hat hung, crumpled and shapeless, about his head, and he did not differ much in external appearance from the men around him. They were a picturesque, undisciplined band, but Cliffe knew that they meant business. He recognized that there was something humorous about his marching with them. He belonged to the orderly cities,

where he had been treated as a man of importance, but now he was swayed by primitive impulses and had cast off the habits of civilization.

The rebel leader had promised to make inquiries about Evelyn, but had learned nothing. Cliffe imagined that the man, having other things to think about, had not been very diligent. He held Gomez accountable for the distress he felt. The rogue had cheated him and stolen his daughter. Cliffe sternly determined that he should pay for it. Gomez, however, was in Rio Frio and, since he could not be reached by other means, Cliffe was ready to fight his way into the town. The curious thing was that instead of finding the prospect disagreeable he was conscious of a certain fierce satisfaction. The commander of the detachment had treated him well, but his limited knowledge of Castilian had made it necessary that he should take his place in the ranks.

The leading files halted, and from their disjointed remarks Cliffe gathered that a picket of the enemy's had been surprised by the scouts. He had heard no shots, but he could imagine the dark-skinned men, many of whom had Indian blood in them, crawling silently through the long grass with unsheathed knives. It was not a pleasant picture; but the road was clear.

The light was growing when they went on, moving faster. The need for haste was obvious. As they were not numerous, they must enter the town while darkness covered their approach, and they were late. Another detachment should have met them, but it had not arrived. On the whole, Cliffe did not think their chances good, but that did not daunt him, and he

trudged on with the rest, the dust rolling like a fog about his head.

After a while the advance split up into two streams of hurrying men, and, going with one body, Cliffe saw the flat-topped houses near ahead. Stumbling among small bushes, and gazing between the shoulders of the men in front, he made out a shadowy opening in the line of buildings. A few minutes later the clatter of sandals rose from slippery stones, there were blank walls about him, and he was in the town. It was hard to believe they had entered unopposed, without a shot being fired, but he supposed the guard had been surprised and overpowered by friends inside.

The backs of the leading files obstructed his view, but now that they were moving down a narrow lane the air throbbed with the sound of their advance. Rifle slings rattled, feet fell with a rapid beat, and now and then an order broke through the jingle of steel. Then a shot rang out and the men began to run, two or three falling out here and there, with the intention, Cliffe supposed, of occupying friendly houses. A little later, the advance guard swung out into a wider street, and a group of men began tearing up the pavement; it had been loosened beforehand, and the stones came up easily. Another group were throwing furniture out of the houses. They worked frantically, though they were fired at, and Cliffe could hear the bullets splash upon the stones.

For the most part, the men were wiry peons, some toiling half naked, but there were a number who looked like prosperous citizens. The light, however, was dim and they were hard to distinguish as they flitted to and fro with their loads or plied the shovel.

A barricade was rising fast, but the alarm had spread. Detached shouts and a confused uproar rolled across the town, the call of bugles joined in, and the sharp clang of the rifles grew more frequent. Cliffe could see no smoke, but he imagined that the roofs farther on were occupied by the troops Gomez was no doubt hurrying into action.

The attack had obviously been well timed and arranged with the coöperation of revolutionaries in the town, but while the rebels had gained an entrance, they seemed unable to follow up their success, and it remained to be seen if they could hold their ground until reënforcements arrived. Finding no opportunity for doing anything useful, Cliffe sat down on the pavement and lighted a cigarette. He did not feel the nervousness he had expected, but he was tired and hungry. It was four o'clock on the previous afternoon when he shared the officers' frugal dinner, and he had eaten nothing since. There was no use in speculating about what was likely to happen in the next few hours, but he meant to have a reckoning with Gomez if he came through alive.

Then, as he watched the blurred figures swarming like ants about the barricade, he broke into a dry smile, for the situation had an ironically humorous side. He had thought himself a sober, business man; and now he was helping a horde of frenzied rebels to overthrow the government he had supported with large sums of money. This was a novelty in the way of finance. Moreover, it was strange that he should derive a quiet satisfaction from the touch of the rifle balanced across his knees. He was better used to the scatter-gun, and did not altogether understand the

sights, but he was determined to shoot as well as he could.

An opportunity was soon offered him. Some one gave an order, and after some pushing and jostling he squeezed himself between the legs of a table on the top of the barricade. A ragged desperado, who scowled furiously and used what seemed to be violently abusive language, had contested the position with him, and it struck Cliffe as remarkable that he should have taken so much trouble to secure a post where he might get shot. He was there, however, and thought he could make pretty good shooting up to a couple hundred yards.

He had got comfortably settled, with his left elbow braced against a ledge to support the rifle, when a body of men in white uniform appeared at the other end of the street. An officer with sword drawn marched at their head, but they did not seem anxious to press forward, or to be moving in very regular order. The distances were uneven, and some of the men straggled toward the side of the street, where it was darker close to the walls. Cliffe sympathized with them, although he felt steadier than he had thought possible.

A rifle flashed on a roof and others answered from the barricade, but only a thin streak of gray vapor that vanished almost immediately marked the firing. It looked as if the rebels had obtained good powder. After a few moments Cliffe heard a shrill humming close above his head, and there was a crash as a man behind him fell backward. Then he felt his rifle jump and jar his shoulder, though he was not otherwise conscious that he had fired. He must have pulled the trig-

ger by instinct, but he did not try to ascertain the result of his shot. He had not come to that yet.

There was a sharp patter on the front of the barricade and splinters sprang from the table legs. Some one near Cliffe cried out, and the patter went on. Raising his head cautiously, he saw that a number of soldiers were firing from the roofs, while the rest ran steadily up the street. They must be stopped. Dropping his chin upon the stock, he stiffened his arms and held his breath as he squeezed the trigger.

After this, he was too busy to retain a clear impression of what happened. His rifle jumped and jarred until it got hot, his shoulder felt sore, and he found he must pull round his cartridge-belt because the nearer clips were empty. He did not know how the fight was going; the separate advancing figures he gazed at through the notch of the rear sight monopolized his attention, but there was thin smoke and dust about, and he could not see them well. It seemed curious that they had not reached the barricade, and he felt angry with them for keeping him in suspense. Then the firing gradually slackened and died away. Everything seemed strangely quiet, except that men were running back down the street in disorder. The rebels had held their ground; the attack had failed.

After a few moments, he noticed that the sun shone down between the houses and it was getting hot. He felt thirsty, and the glare hurt his eyes, which smarted with the dust and acrid vapor that hung about the spot. All the soldiers, however, had not gone back; several lay in strange, slack attitudes near the front of the barricade, and a rebel who sprang down, perhaps with the object of securing fresh cartridges, suddenly

dropped. The rest lay close and left the fallen alone. Then a tall priest in threadbare cassock and clumsy raw-hide shoes came out of a house and with the help of two or three others carried the victims inside. Cliffe heard somebody say that it was Father Agustin.

Soon afterward a man near Cliffe gave him a cigarette, and he smoked it, although his mouth was dry and the tobacco had a bitter taste. The heat was getting worse and his head began to ache, but he was busy wondering what would happen next. Gomez must have more troops than the handful he had sent; the rebels could not hold the position against a strong force, and their supports had not arrived. He hoped Gomez had no machine-guns.

Suddenly the attack recommenced. There were more soldiers, and a rattle of firing that broke out farther up the street suggested that the revolutionaries were being attacked in flank. Some of the men seemed to hesitate and began to look behind them, but they got steadier when an officer called out; and Cliffe understood that a detachment had been sent back to protect their rear. In the meantime, the soldiers in front were coming on. They were slouching, untidy fellows, but their brown faces were savage, and Cliffe knew they meant to get in. It was, however, his business to keep them out, and he fired as fast as he could load. When the barrel got so hot that he could hardly touch it, he paused to cool the open breach and anxiously looked about.

The street seemed filled with white figures, but they had opened out, and in the gaps he could see the dazzling stones over which the hot air danced. There

was a gleam of bright steel in the sun, and he noticed that the walls were scarred. Raw spots marked where the chipped whitewash had fallen off and the adobe showed through. But there was no time to observe these things; the foremost men were dangerously near. Finding he could now hold his rifle, Cliffe snapped in a cartridge and closed the breach. Then he spent a few tense minutes. The enemy reached the foot of the barrier and climbed up. Rifles flashed from roofs and windows, streaks of flame rippled along the top of the barricade, and one or two of the defenders, perhaps stung by smarting wounds or maddened by excitement, leaped down with clubbed weapons and disappeared. Cliffe kept his place between the table legs and pulled round his cartridge-belt.

The tension could not last. Flesh and blood could not stand it. He understood why the men had leaped down, courting death. He hoped his own nerve was normally good, but if the struggle was not decided soon, he could not answer for himself. He must escape from the strain somehow, if he had to charge the attackers with an empty rifle.

There was a sudden change. The climbing white figures seemed to melt away, and though the rifles still clanged from roofs and windows the firing slackened along the barricade. The troops were going back, running not retiring, and trying to break into houses from which men with rude weapons thrust them out. It looked as if the inhabitants were all insurgents now.

Soon the priest reappeared, and Cliffe left his post and sat down where there was a strip of shade. He had helped to beat off two attacks, but he was doubtful about the third. While he rested, a fat, swarthy

woman brought him a cup of *caña,* and he was surprised when he saw how much of the fiery spirit he had drunk. The woman smiled, and went on to the next man with the cup.

Cliffe wondered how long he had been fighting, for he found his watch had stopped; but the sun was not high yet. After all, the reënforcements he had begun to despair of might arrive in time. While he comforted himself with this reflection, some of the other men dug a trench behind the barricade, and citizens, loading the earth into baskets, carried it off. Cliffe did not know what this was for, but he supposed the baskets would be used to strengthen defenses somewhere else. It was a long time since he had handled a spade, but if they needed his help he could dig. Pulling himself up with an effort, he took a tool from a breathless man and set to work.

After a time a citizen appeared with a bundle of papers and a white flag. An officer signed him to come forward, and taking the papers from him threw them among the men. Cliffe got one, and finding a man who spoke a little English, asked him what the notice meant. The man said it was a proclamation by Gomez, stating that, as the people had serious ground for dissatisfaction with the President's administration and were determined to end it, he must accede to the wish of the leading citizens, who had urged him to form a provisional government. He promised a general amnesty for past offenses and the prompt redress of all grievances.

"So the dog turns on his master!" the translator remarked with bitter scorn. "Altiera was a tyrant, but this rogue would be worse!"

The insurgent leader, standing on top of the barricade, read the proclamation in a loud, ironical voice, and when he tore it up with a dramatic gesture, the roar of mocking laughter that rang down the street showed what all who heard it thought of Gomez's claim. Then people ran out of the houses and pelted the messenger with stones as he hurriedly retired, until a few shots from a roof cleared the street.

"The dog has bought the soldiers! Altiera should have been his own paymaster," the man whom Cliffe had questioned remarked.

For the next half hour everything was quiet, but Cliffe felt uneasy. One could not tell what Gomez was doing, but it was plain that he must make a resolute attempt to crush the rebels before he turned his forces against the President. He must have felt reasonably sure of his ground when he made his last daring move. As his terms had been scornfully rejected, the country would soon be devastated by three hostile factions, which would make Evelyn's danger very grave. Cliffe forgot that he was thirsty and there was a pain in his left side brought on by want of food. If help did not come by sunset, his friends would be overwhelmed by numbers when it was too dark to shoot straight.

Then he saw that they were threatened by a more urgent danger. The end of the street opened into the plaza, which had been deserted. The houses on its opposite side were shuttered, and the sun burned down into the dazzling square, except for a strip of shadow beneath one white wall. Now, however, a body of men appeared, carrying something across the uneven pavement. When they stopped and began to put the

separate parts together, Cliffe saw that it was a machine-gun. He wondered why Gomez had not made use of it earlier, unless, perhaps, it had formed the main defense of the *presidio*.

The barrel, thickened by its water jacket, gleamed ominously in front of the steel shield as the men got the gun into position; but it was unthinkable that they should be left to do so undisturbed, and Cliffe scrambled back to his post when an order rang out. He felt that he hated the venomous machine, which had perhaps been bought with his money. Steadying his rifle, he fired as fast as he could.

Though the smoke was thin, it hung about the rebels' position, making it hard to see, and Cliffe feared their shots were going wide, but after a few moments the barricade trembled, and there was a curious, whirring sound above his head. Dust and splinters of stone were flung up, and large flakes fell from the neighboring walls. All this seemed to happen at once, before he was conscious of a measured thudding like a big hammer falling very fast which drowned the reports of the rifles and dominated everything. The flimsy defenses were pierced. Gaps began to open here and there, and men dropped back into the trench. Then a fierce yell rang across the city, and although Cliffe heard no order the rebel fire slackened. Peering through the vapor, he saw the soldiers were frantically dragging the gun into a new position; the shield no longer hid the men at the breach, but Cliffe did not shoot. He felt paralyzed as he watched to see what was happening.

The hammering began again, and flashes that looked

pale in the sunshine leapt about the muzzle of the gun. Soldiers lying down behind it were using their rifles, and another detachment hurriedly came up. Cliffe's view of the plaza was limited. He could not see one side of it, where an attack was evidently being made, but presently a mob of running men swept into sight. A few dropped upon the pavement and began to fire, but the main body ran straight for the gun, and he noticed with a thrill that they were led by a light-skinned man. Some of them fell, but the rest went on, and the rebels behind the barricade began to shout. The eagerly expected reënforcements had arrived.

The man with the fair skin was the first to reach the gun. Cliffe saw his pistol flash; but the struggle did not last. Gomez's men fell back and the others swung round the gun. Then, as flame blazed from its muzzle, a triumphant yell rose from the barricade, and Cliffe, springing up on the table, waved his hat and shouted with the rest. Grahame, with his handful of peons, had saved the day.

In a few seconds Cliffe felt dizzy. His head was unsteady, his knees seemed weak, and as he tried to get down he lost his balance. Falling from the top of the barricade, he plunged heavily into the trench, where his senses left him.

It was some time afterward when he came to himself, and, looking round in a half-dazed manner, wondered where he was. The big room in which he lay was shadowy and cool, and he did not feel much the worse except that his head ached and his eyes were dazzled. A tumult seemed to be going on outside, but the room was quiet, and a girl in a white dress sat

near by. He thought he ought to know her, although he could not see her face until she heard him move and came toward him.

"Evelyn!" he gasped.

"Yes," she answered, smiling. "How do you feel?"

"Dizzy," said Cliffe. "But this is Rio Frio, isn't it? How did you get here?"

"You mustn't talk," she said firmly, and he saw that she had a glass in her hand. "Drink this and go to sleep again."

Cliffe did not mean to go to sleep, although he drained the glass because he was thirsty. There was much he wanted to know; but he found it difficult to talk, and Evelyn would not answer. After a futile effort to shake it off, he succumbed to the drowsiness that was overpowering him.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE COMING DAWN

IT was getting dark when Cliffe wakened. The windows were open, and a flickering red glow shone into the room. Footsteps and voices rose from the street below, as if the city were astir, but this did not interest him much. Evelyn was standing near, and a man whom he could not see well sat in the shadow.

"You must have something to tell me," Cliffe said to the girl. "We seem to be in safe quarters; but how did we get here?"

Evelyn knelt down beside his couch and put her hand on his hot forehead. It felt pleasantly cool, and Cliffe lay still with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Father Agustin brought you in here several hours ago," she explained; "but that was before I arrived. I was worried, but the doctor says we needn't be alarmed."

"That's a sure thing." Cliffe replied. "I'm feeling pretty well, but thirsty. What's the matter with me, anyhow?"

"Exhaustion, and perhaps slight sunstroke and shock. You must have had a bad fall, because you are bruised."

"I certainly fell, right down to the bottom of the

trench; but that's not what I want to talk about. It is a big relief to see you safe, but where have you been?"

"It will take some time to tell." Evelyn bent closer over him as she began an account of her adventures in a low voice, and Cliffe dully imagined that she did not want the other occupant of the room to hear. The fellow was no doubt a doctor.

"I had no difficulty after I reached Don Martin's camp," she finished. "His daughter, the pretty girl we saw at the International, was with him most of the time, and afterward her duenna treated me very well. When the rebels advanced on Rio Frio, Don Martin thought it safer for Blanca and me to go with them, but they left us outside with a guard until the town was taken. Then I was told that a priest had picked you up badly hurt and they brought me here. The house belongs to a merchant who took some part in the revolution. You can imagine how anxious I was until Father Agustin sent a doctor."

"I hate to think of the danger you were in," he said; "though you seem to have shown surprising grit."

Evelyn laughed and patted his shoulder.

"Then I must have inherited it. I'm told that you and the others held the barricade stubbornly for two hours. Don Martin admits that he might not have taken Rio Frio if it hadn't been for the stand you made."

"He wouldn't have taken it, and there'd have been very few of us left, if Grahame hadn't rushed the gun. But I've something else to thank him for. It seems from your story that he got himself into trouble by going to your help."

"Yes," said Evelyn quietly. "You can thank him now, if you like." She beckoned the man across the room. "Come and join us, dear."

The red glow from outside fell on her face as Cliffe gave her a surprised look, and he noticed that she blushed. Then he held out his hand to Grahame, because he thought he understood.

"It seems I owe you a good deal," he said.

"Well," Grahame returned, smiling, "I suppose my intentions were good, but I didn't accomplish much, and my partner had to run a serious risk to get me out of trouble."

"The way you rushed that gun was great."

"It might have been better if we had taken the fellows in the rear, but we were told that they were making things hot for you, and there was no time to get round."

"When we met in Havana I'd no idea that you were up against me," Cliffe said with a laugh. "Curious, isn't it, that we should make friends while I was backing the President and you the rebels!" He turned to the window. "What's the fire outside?"

"The *presidio* burning. Gomez used it as headquarters and made his last stand there."

"Ah! Then your friends have finished him?"

Grahame nodded.

"A rather grim business. He had much to answer for, but although half his troops deserted, he made a gallant end."

"Where's your partner, and what are the rebel bosses doing now?"

"Walthew was patrolling the streets with a company of brigands when I last saw him; he promised

to meet me here as soon as he was relieved. The others are busy forming a provisional government. Don Martin said he'd call on you soon."

"I owe him some thanks, but I mean to cut my connection with this country's affairs. No more political speculations; I've had enough."

Grahame laughed.

"I can imagine that. These people are an unstable lot, and it's not certain that Don Martin, who's much the best man they have, will be the next president. . . . But we were told to keep you quiet, and Evelyn is tired. She had to follow the rebels' march all night, but wouldn't rest until she was satisfied about you."

"How long have you called her Evelyn?" Cliffe demanded, looking hard at him.

"He will tell you about that to-morrow," Evelyn answered with a blush. "You must lie still and go to sleep again if you can, but if you give trouble, we'll leave the señora Rocas, who is deaf and very clumsy, to look after you."

When Cliffe fell asleep, Evelyn and Grahame went out on to the balcony and watched the moonlight creep across the town. There were lights in the cafés, and excited citizens gathered in the streets. Now and then a few angry cries broke out, but for the most part the scraps of news that spread among the crowd were received with exultant cheers.

The next day Cliffe was much better, and after breakfast Grahame found him sitting in the shady *patio*. He listened to the younger man quietly, and then held out his hand.

"I'm glad I can agree," he said. "I'll miss her, but I feel that she'll be safe with you."

Ten minutes later Grahame met Walthew, who looked disturbed and indignant.

"What are they doing at the council?" Grahame asked.

"Fooling!" said Walthew fiercely. "Seems to me they're mad! Last night they were solid for Don Martin, but now a faction that means to make Castillo president is gaining ground."

"A number of them must know he gave their plans away to save his skin."

"They know, all right. One fellow urged that Castillo did so as a matter of policy, because he meant to force Altiera's hand. Guess the crowd who want him would believe anything that suited them!"

"Well," Grahame said thoughtfully, "I've had my doubts whether they'd get on with Don Martin. His code of political morality's rather high; they want a man who won't expect too much. I dare say they feel that after turning out Altiera they're entitled to a few opportunities for graft themselves and for finding their friends official jobs. I'm sorry for Sarmiento, though. What does he say?"

"Haven't seen him this morning. Father Agustin believes he'll respect the wish of the majority, although the fellows who did the fighting are all on his side."

Grahame went to look for Evelyn, and it was noon when Walthew met him again.

"After a glorious row, they've chosen Castillo—and I wish them joy of him!" he said. "Don Martin withdraws his claim, and wants to leave to-morrow. He's going to live in Cuba, and if Cliffe's fit to travel, we may as well all clear out. I'm sick of this place.

Anyway, I'd like to take Blanca and her father across in the *Enchantress.*"

"There will be no difficulty about that. I think we can sell the boat at New Orleans. Have you made any plans?"

"Sure. I'm going to marry Blanca at Havana and then take her home. She seemed to think she ought to stay with her father, but Don Martin convinced her this wasn't necessary. Guess it hurt him, but he told me the girl had had a pretty rough time wandering about in exile, and he means to give her a chance of a brighter life."

"Why did you fix on Havana for the wedding?"

Walthew laughed.

"My people will see there is no use in kicking when I take my wife home; and they've only to give Blanca a fair show to get fond of her. Then there are a number of Americans in Havana, and I can get the thing properly registered and fixed up by our consul. Don Martin agreed." He paused a minute and added: "Don Martin's going to address the citizens in the plaza at six o'clock, and I think he'd like you and Cliffe to be there."

Grahame promised to ask Cliffe; and soon after dinner he found that a place had been kept for his party on the broad steps of the church of San Sebastian. The air was cooling and dusk was near, but the light had not gone, and the square was packed with an expectant crowd, except where a space was kept. The lower steps were occupied by officials and leading citizens, but the two highest were empty.

For a few minutes there was deep silence, and nobody moved in the crowded plaza. Then a murmur

rose as the leather curtain across the door was drawn back and Don Martin came out, with three priests in their robes behind him. He stood bareheaded on the second step, very straight and soldierlike, but plainly dressed in white, with no sash or badge of office; the priests standing above, with Father Agustin's tall figure in the middle. As he turned his face toward the crowd a great shout went up:

"Viva Sarmiento! Viva el libertador!"

Don Martin bowed, but did not speak; and a bugle call rang across the square and was followed by a measured tramp of feet. Men marching in loose fours swung out of a shadowy opening and advanced upon the church. A red sash round the waist with the ends left hanging loose was the only uniform they wore, and Grahame felt a curious, emotional quiver as he recognized the detachment he had led. He understood that the best of them had been enrolled for a time as a national guard. Their brown faces were impassive as they filled the open space, but after they swung into double line, instead of the conventional salute, they waved their ragged hats, and a roar broke out:

"Viva Sarmiento! Viva el maestro!"

Then some of the group looked anxious, and there was a stir in the crowd as an officer approached the steps. He had his pistol drawn, but he lowered it, and stood opposite Don Martin with his hat off.

"Your comrades salute you, señor," he said. "You have led us to victory, and if you have fresh orders for us, we obey you still."

He spoke clearly, in a meaning tone, and there was an applauding murmur from the crowd that gathered

strength and filled the square. Everybody seemed to feel a sudden tension, and Grahame imagined that the superseded leader had only to give the signal for a counter revolution to begin; but he saw that Father Agustin wore a quiet smile.

Don Martin raised his hand.

"I thank you, and I know your loyalty; but it belongs to your country, of which I am a private citizen. I can give no orders, but I ask you to serve the new government as well as you have served me."

The officer went back to his men with a moody air, and Don Martin turned to the crowd.

"In a national crisis, it is a citizen's duty to devote himself to his country's service, and this I have done; but it is a duty that carries no claim for reward. Many of you have helped me with effort and money, and some have given their lives; but the rough work is done and the crisis is past. Now that I am no longer needed, I lay down my authority, and it is better in several ways that I should go. But you who remain have still much to do. It is harder to build than to pull down, and your task is to establish justice, freedom, and prosperity. The best foundation is obedience to the new leader the nation has chosen."

He moved back into the gloom, for darkness was gathering fast, and after a few words of grave advice Father Agustin blessed the people. Then the national guard marched away and the crowd broke up; but Grahame and his party waited, with Don Martin standing behind them by the door of the church. A smell of incense floated out, and dim lights twinkled in the building. No one spoke until the measured tramp of feet had died away.

Then Grahame put his hand on Don Martin's arm.

"The sacrifice you have made to-night must have cost you something," he said in a sympathetic voice.

"It is seldom easy to do what is best," Don Martin answered, smiling sadly. "And now, with your permission, I should like to be alone. We will start for Valverde early to-morrow."

They left him in the deserted plaza.

"What a man that is!" Cliffe remarked. "If they were all like him in Congress, there'd be a big improvement in our politics—and I guess you'd have some use for a few of his kind at Westminster."

"That's true," Grahame agreed. "I can't say that such men are scarce, but as a rule they don't come to the top. They do what's demanded of them, and then quietly fall out of sight."

The next morning they set out for the coast. The *Enchantress* was in the roadstead when they reached the port, and they went straight on board. Macallister met them at the gangway, and there was deep feeling in his face as he shook hands with his comrades; but a few moments later he surveyed the group with a grin. Walthew had helped Evelyn on board, and Blanca stood near Grahame.

"I'm thinking ye're no' sorted right," he said; and when Evelyn blushed he resumed with a chuckle: "Ye need no' tell me; I kenned what would happen, and I wish ye all happiness."

He turned with a flourish to Don Martin.

"We'd ha' dressed the ship for ye, señor, only our flags are a bit ragged, and I couldna' find the one ye have served so weel."

"Thank you," said Don Martin. "We hope our flag will be better known before long."

Macallister hurried below to raise steam, but it was some time before they got a working pressure, and dusk was falling when the windlass hauled in the rattling cable and Grahame rang the telegraph. The propeller churned the phosphorescent sea, the *Enchantress* forged ahead, and the white town began to fade into the haze astern.

Don Martin leaned upon the taffrail, watching the dim littoral, until it melted from his sight and only the black cordillera in the background cut against the sky. Then he joined the group about the deck-house and lighted a cigarette.

"Another act finished and the curtain dropped, but one looks forward to the next with confidence," he said.

"It might have opened better if you had kept the leading part," Grahame replied, and added meaningly: "You could have kept it."

"That is possible," Don Martin agreed. "But it might not have been wise. I fought for peace, and I was satisfied when it was secured."

"Still, I don't see why you left," Cliffe interposed. "Is Castillo strong enough to rule your people?"

"We must give him an opportunity; if he has some failings, his intentions are good. No rule is free from faults, and when it is autocratic a possible claimant for the chief post is a danger to the State. All who love change and turmoil fix their hopes on him."

"Do you mean to live in Cuba?"

"Yes. I have some skill in organization and a little money left, and friends wish me to help in the develop-

ment of a new sugar estate. It is not very far from Valverde, and one hears what is going on." Don Martin paused and spread out his hands. "If all goes well, I shall grow sugar, but if it happens that my country needs me I will go back again."

Walthew changed the subject, and presently Evelyn and Grahame strolled forward to the bow. There was moonlight on the water, and the *Enchantress* steamed smoothly up the glittering track while the foam that curled about her stem shone with phosphorescent flame.

"I wonder where that path is leading us?" Evelyn said.

"Toward the dawn," Grahame answered. "There's glamour in moonlight and mystery in the dark, but we're moving on to meet the sunshine."

THE END